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Media Contact: Suzanne Wright at  
[Suzanne@eldoradocountyfair.org](mailto:Suzanne@eldoradocountyfair.org) or  
Jody Gray, El Dorado County Fair CEO at 530.621.5860  
High resolution images available at  
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## Clifton and Warren Hay Bucking Contest Features Contestants

### “Cute as Can Be” and “Buff to the Hilt”

By Kristi Buffo  
For the El Dorado County Fair

It's a bale of hay...so, how hard can it be to move it from point A to point B? Darned hard actually, say those who do it—it is tough, exacting work. And, as I found out, if you have to ask the question it means you probably didn't grow up on a farm... and you've never competed in the Hay Bucking contest at the El Dorado County Fair.

“We definitely figure out our strategy ahead of time and go in with a game plan” says Brian Rush of Cool, winner of the fair's 2009 Hay Bucking contest. The 23-year-old Rush, who works for Cool Feed and Ranch Supply and has competed with partner Steve Costa each year since 2006, says both strength and technique play into successful hay bucking. He should know too, he once “bucked” 16 bales of hay in one minute, 16 seconds!

“It gets pretty competitive out there,” says Rush. “A lot of the feed stores from the area have teams. I think the men's division has 15 teams or more, with everyone competing to be the fastest.”

The practice (or “chore” actually) of hay bucking harks back to El Dorado County's agricultural roots and is still a big part of life for the county's farmers and ranchers. It involves taking hay bales, usually 85 to 150lbs, and stacking them by hand in a storage area, such as a barn or in a truck for transport. The work is very strenuous and physically demanding and one must use a proper technique in order to not grow weary too quickly.

At the fair's hay bucking contest, contestants starting **as young as ??** must move bales of hay a pre-described distance and load them into the back of a truck. “It's so cute to watch the little kids figure out how to move the hay,” says Suzanne Wright, a longtime fairgoer who visits every year from Sebastopol. “The bales often weigh more than they do!”

The adult teams, broken up in to men's, women's, and co-ed divisions, go from being “cute” to downright impressive. “Some of these guys, and women for that matter, are so incredibly buff, says Wright. “Just watching their physical strength alone is amazing, and then you have to take into account that they're competing down to mere seconds for the best time...it's a real nail-biter!”

The stacking of the hay into the truck is very precise too and must be done “just so” says Rush. There can't be any gaps in the hay, the bales must be interlocking and they can't stick out past the mirrors of the truck. These are important real life considerations if you were actually going to transport the hay. Contestants who violate these rules are penalized with added time.

“It’s really fun to watch, says Wright, because you start to see how a smaller person with a good technique, or a team with a great strategy can out do all the others and win.”

**Hay Bucking Contest**  
**Saturday, June 19 beginning at 7:30pm**  
**Equestrian Arena**

Contests open to youth, women’s, men’s and co-ed teams  
Participation is free with paid admission to the fair  
Register at the arena prior to the event.

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