

Hay and feed supplier

Nick Nunn talks shipping shavings to the Middle East in the middle of a war, how selecting hay is now a science and why he's lucky his job is also his hobby

We've always made and sold hay and straw from our 550-acre arable farm and have always had a lot of clients from the racing industry around us. In fact, my grandfather used to supply Sir Noel Murless. About 30 years ago, we went to a timber mill and they had shavings they couldn't sell. I started taking a few pallets, then lorryloads and it grew from there.

We were also hit by a war tariff, which was \$3,000 (£2,220) per container. Some of the containers that left at the beginning of the year have only just arrived in the past week or two. But I always say, there's no point in worrying about the things that are out of your hands.

On the farm, we probably grow 150 acres of hay and we

need to go that far.

To date, the furthest we've had to go is Germany. We've had lorries delivering in Germany and then bringing haylage back with them. It was important to us that we kept everyone going – and we did.

Pretty much everything we get out of the business, we put back in. We like growing the business and having nice yards and smart equipment. I like to see the whole operation looking smart. And it's a great team – we're all about customer service and at 5pm on a Friday, when all the clients have been looked after for the week, that's a really satisfying feeling.

I couldn't pick a favourite client – all my customers are my favourites. But if I really had to choose a favourite equine client, it would be Frankel. He's the best I've seen

in my lifetime and we were lucky enough to see him from a youngster at Juddmonte Farms, one of the most successful stud farms in the world, which we supply.

I followed Frankel's racing career and now I'm supplying him back at Juddmonte, where he's standing at stud.

They say that you should have your job as your hobby and that's us; we enjoy what we do. My father-in-law trained horses, my brother-in-law trains horses. I've always been interested in, and supplied, racing yards. You tend to meet a lot of characters, especially in the racing yards! **H&H**

● **As told to Catherine Welton**

"If I had to choose a favourite client, it would be Frankel. He's the best I've seen in my lifetime"

Now, we sell 20,000 bales of shavings and 100 tonnes of horse feed a week. We supply about 80% of the racing yards in Newmarket, as well as livery yards, polo yards and showjumping yards.

We have seven lorries running all day long, which is a logistical challenge. We deliver all over the country and overseas, too. I've just sent a lorry to London to supply a polo yard there. And we export a lot to the Middle East, mainly shavings.

We've had a lot of challenges over the past few years, what with Brexit, Covid and various wars. On the day before the war with Iran started, we had a shipment that was bound for the UAE. We had 18 containers on the water and we didn't know when they were going or when they would arrive.

The shipping company had no idea either – some of it ended up in India, where you have to pay for every day it's being held there.

also buy in an awful lot. So I have to go and look at it, check it's right for the job and get it analysed. I'm looking for a product that looks nice and smells nice, it's clean, with no weeds or rubbish in it. You know when you've found a nice bale of hay but to back that up, we send samples to Ireland and have them tested.

It's like when you buy food from the supermarket – you want to know what's in it. Our kind of customers want to see what they're feeding their horses – it's a science now, not just a bale of hay. Of course, everyone wants something different and there are various grades – the pony in the livery yard doesn't want the same kind of hay as a racehorse.

With recent shortages of hay, we've had to bring in more. Over the past few months, the prices have been all over the place, with the fuel and everything. At one point, we were even getting prices from Canada, although in the end we didn't

NEXT WEEK

Professor Richard Piercy, equine neurology specialist



Undaunted by current global challenges, Nick manages to keep the show on the road

Nick sells 20,000 bales of shavings and 100 tonnes of horse feed each week, the majority going to the racing yards in Newmarket



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