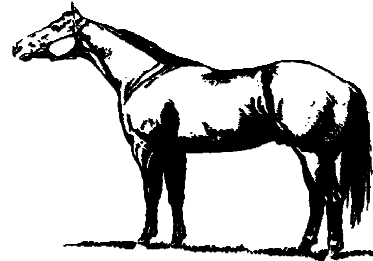


Animal Science Horse Information Series

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COLOR IS NOT JUST IN SPRING FLOWERS

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Everyone looks forward to green grass, trees leafing out and the beautiful colors of flowers in spring.

You will also find a wide array of color in foals across Tennessee this spring.

With 210,000 horses in the Volunteer State, Tennessee citizens can observe foals frolicking in horse pastures in all 95 counties. One can find horses from the Tri-Cities in upper East Tennessee to the Mississippi River Delta in West Tennessee.

Tennessee has a vital and vibrant horse breeding industry. Not only will one see foals and their dams (Mothers) frolicking in pastures in rural areas, but mares and foals are also common sights in suburban areas.

Horse numbers are highly correlated with human population, which means there are lots of horses in the metropolitan areas in Tennessee.

Tennessee Walking Horses comprise the largest group of horses in the Volunteer State with numerous breeding farms.

In addition to Tennessee Walking Horses, one will find many different breeds from American Quarter Horses to Warmbloods. This great variety of horses help contribute to a beautiful array of colors in newborn foals in the spring. In recent years, highly colored horses have become more popular.

Because of breed association rules, foals are born from January through the summer months.

Horses also change colors. The shorter nights in the fall cause horses to develop a heavier winter haircoat which usually is darker. The short days of spring, with more daylight, result in horses “shedding” these winter haircoats, resulting in a lighter color.

Some colors are rather well known such as black, brown, gray or bay. Other colors, even among breed associations, are given different names. For example, horses with reddish body color are known as chestnuts in the Thoroughbred industry but are also called sorrels in the Quarter Horse and other breeds.

There are rather special colors and names for some horses. A “grullo” is a horse that is colored like a mouse.

A color that most individuals can identify is the palomino, a golden yellow body color with a white mane and tail. Trigger, Roy Rogers’ horse, and Mr. Ed were palominos.

Roans, either red or blue, have white hairs mixed with hairs of another color. Red roans have white hairs and chestnut or bay body hairs. Blue roans are a mingling of black or brown and white hairs. These are not hairs with two colors or shades but two distinct

colored hairs mingled together. The roan color does not fade as grays do.

Duns and buckskins are popular today but are two different colors. Duns have a reddish to yellowish body color with mane and tail of similar color, flaxen, whitish or a mixed color. They also have a darker dorsal stripe from their withers down the middle of their backs to their tailhead and a transverse stripe over the withers. The dorsal and transverse stripes make a cross. They have zebra stripes, which are horizontal stripes below the knees.

Buckskins have a yellowish or gold body color with black points, mane, tail and lower legs. Buckskins do not typically have a dorsal stripe. Kevin Costner rode a buckskin in *Dances with Wolves*.

Spotted Horses or Paints are highly colored. A Paint horse had the lead in the recent movie, *Hidalgo*. Their color patterns may be described as tobiano, overo, tovero or sabino. All will have some form of white spots and another color. Tobianos have regular and distinct white body markings with white usually crossing their backs. Their heads are usually a dark color, and their tails have two colors.

Overos usually do not have white crossing their backs. Their white markings are irregular or splashed, and their tails are normally one color.

Toveros have dark color around the ears that also may cover the forehead and/or eyes. One or both eyes will be blue. There are colored chest spots and spots at the tailhead of varying size.

Sabino is similar to roans with a basic body color mixed with white overo markings, high white stockings and white face markings.

Three colors which have become popular in recent years are cremello, perlino and champagne. Cremello horses have a cream to white haircoat, with dark mane and tail that may have a rust or chocolate shade. Their skin is pink too grayish, and they have blue or amber eyes.

Perlino is a cream to white haircoat, with a white, cream or off-white mane and tail. Their skin is pink and eyes are blue or amber.

Champagne is a pale chocolate brown to yellow color with pink or light brown skin and amber eyes.

The Appaloosa is another highly colored breed with varying color patterns. The best-known pattern is the spotted white blanket over the hips.

In addition to body color, horse breeders also are interested in the white markings on the face and legs. These are carefully detailed for registration and identification purposes.

White markings are more popular today. Owners often select horses that have lots of “chrome.” On the other hand, some associations restrict the amount of white on the face and legs. White above the knees or hocks is not allowed in some breeds.

While color is an important personnel preference, the key is still performance. As athletes, horses that can perform well in shows and competitive events are in demand.

Whether one wants a good trail riding horse or has aspiration of owning a World’s Grand Champion Tennessee Walking Horse, the colorful foals romping in Tennessee pastures this spring will later be the trusted mounts and companions of tomorrow.

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