Coat Colors & Markings Terms Glossary

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color TERMS

There is a wealth of jargon used throughout the horse world. This is especially true when discussing equine colors and markings. Learning this vocabulary allows you to better understand articles, event language, and what trainers, farriers, veterinarians, and other horse owners are saying. The following list of terms, while in no way comprehensive, contains some of the terms used to discuss horse colors and markings.

Albino: Term used to indicate lack of pigment. True albino horses have pink skin, white hair coat, and pink eyes.

Bald-Faced: U.S. term used to describe a horse with a predominantly white face.

Bay: Coat color - deep reddish brown with black mane and tail.

Black: A black horse almost invariably has black eyes, hooves, and skin. The points are always black. Tan or brown hairs on the muzzle or flank indicates that the horse in not a true black but a seal brown.

Black Points: Black mane, tail, and extremities.

Blanket: A spotting pattern of the Appaloosa in which a large area over the horse's croup, loin, and/or back is white possibly with the spots and the rest of the body is a dark color.

Blaze: Elongated white marking down the front of the horse's face. (Also called a *stripe*.)

Brown: A brown horse is one whose coloration is brown. Many brown horses are mistakenly called black, because they are so dark. A close examination of the hair on the muzzle and around the lips will quickly tell whether the horse is brown or black. The mane and tail are always dark.

Buckskin: Coat color - body can range from crème to dark bronze, mane, tail, legs, and tips of ears are black or dark brown. Horses showing similar coloration, but with a *dorsal stripe*, are called *dun*.

Calico: The same as patched, although generally applied to the livelier color combinations normally found among pintos.

Chestnut: A chestnut is a horse whose coat is basically red. His mane and tail are normally the same shade as his body. If the mane and tail are lighter in color than the body, the horse is termed a flax or flaxen chestnut. The mane and tail of a chestnut horse are never black. Chestnut color varies from a bright yellowish red to a rich mahogany red.

Chrome: U.S. term used by auctioneers and in sales ads to describe the white markings of a horse.

Coronet: A white strip covering the coronary band. Also the band around the top of the hoof, from which the hoof wall grows.

Cross: A dark stripe across the shoulders.

Dappled: Means darker spots are embossed on the coat.

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Dark: Indicates a predominance of black hair or deep color, with a little yellow apparent.

Dorsal Stripe: A continuous stripe of black or brown hair from neck to tail. Seen in horses of "primitive" breeding, such as the Exmoor and the Norwegian Fjord and is often seen in dun-colored horses. (Also called *Eel Stripe*.)

Dun: Coat color. Yellow or sandy colored body with black *points*. Also has a *dorsal strip*.

Eel Stripe: A continuous stripe of black or brown hair from neck to tail. Seen in horses of "primitive" breeding, such as the Exmoor and the Norwegian Fjord and is often seen in dun-colored horses. (Also called *Dorsal Stripe*.)

Flame: A few white hairs in center of forehead.

Flax: Flax or flaxen, when applied to mane and/or tail, indicates a straw yellow or dirty white. It is normally caused by a mixture of dark hair in with the white.

Flea-bitten: A gray or roan horse having small black or blue specks or spots on a predominantly white background.

Full Stocking: White extends from the coronet to and including the knee.

Golden: refers to the sheen which, when the light strikes certain shades of dun, chestnut, and bay, make them seem translucent and golden.

Gray: Coat color ranging from pure white to dark gray. Further described by terms such as "dappled" (small iron-gray circles on a lighter background) and "flea-bitten" (flecks of dark gray on a white background).

Half Stocking: White extends from the coronet to the middle of the cannon.

Light: Indicates a predominance of yellow or white hairs.

Line-back: A darker ribbon, which goes along the back from the mane to the tail. The line may be almost any color, although red and black are most common.

Mealy Muzzle: Oatmeal colored muzzle, such as that seen in the Exmoor.

Overo: Coat pattern seen in Paint Horses. Uneven splashes of white over the horse's belly, legs, neck, and head. See also Tobiano .

Palomino: Coat color in which the body can be varying shades of gold, with a silver or white mane and tail.

Patched: Indicates large roan spots on some base color.

Piebald: English term for body color of white with black patches.

Pinto: Term for coat color of white with patches of another color. (See also *piebald* and *skewbald.*)

Points: Term for the lower legs, mane and tail. For example, bay with black points is a bay with black lower legs as well as the customary black mane and tail.

Pure: Indicates uniformity, clarity, and depth of color.

Ratty: Indicates lack of uniformity in color - a dull, dirty tone.

Ray: A black line along the spine. Also called dorsal stripe.

Red-speckled: A gray or roan horse having bay or chestnut specks or spots on a predominantly white background.

Roan: Coat color in which white hairs are mixed with the base coat color. A strawberry roan is where chestnut and white hairs are mixed to give an overall reddish effect. A blue roan refers to a coat in which black and white hairs are mixed, giving an overall blue effect.

Silver: Used to denote a mane or tail which is white with a few black hairs giving it a silver cast.

Smokey: A blue tinge to the color; it is an obscure tone.

Snip: A small patch of white which runs over the muzzle, often to the lips.

Sock: White marking on any or all of a horse's lower legs. Markings extending higher than the knee or hock are called *stockings.*

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Spotted: Indicates spots of solid color on some base coat.

Star: Name given to any white marking on the horse's forehead. (Small markings are called a *snip*.)

Skewbald: English term for body color of irregular white and color patches other than black (i.e. brown, chestnut) Called *pinto* in the U.S.

Stocking: White marking on any or all of a horse's legs, which extends beyond the knee or hock. Markings, which are confined below the knee or hock, are called *socks*.

Stripe: Elongated white marking down the front of the horse's face. (Also called a *blaze*.)

Striped: Indicates spots of solid color on some base coat.

Toasted: Implies darker patches, dull finish, or dark overcast.

Tobiano: A paint pattern in which the horse has white across the topline, which extends downward, white legs, and a dark head.

True White: Mane and tails have only white hairs.

White: The true white horse is born pure white and dies the same color.

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