

Guidelines to Coat Color & Coat Characteristics

Chestnut – shades from golden red to dark reddish brown. The mane, tail, and legs are not black, but are the color of the body or shades lighter or darker. Black or dark chestnuts may look basically black with the exception of red hairs on the coronet, pasterns, and/or back of fetlocks.

Black – true black without any light areas.

Bay – reddish shades from reddish tan to dark mahogany brown. All bay horses have black manes and tails, and black legs below the knees and hocks.

Brown – black with light mealy areas at muzzle, eyes, flanks, and inside of legs.

Palomino – shades of very pale creamy yellow to golden yellow, with flaxen, silver, or white mane and tail. Palomino is produced by the action of a single cream dilution gene on a chestnut base.

Buckskin – tan to yellow coat, with black mane and tail and black on lower legs. Buckskins without the dun gene may have a dorsal line, but this is countershading, not a true dorsal stripe. Buckskin is produced by the action of a single cream dilution gene on a bay base.

Smoky black – varying shades of black, especially when weathered or sun-faded. May appear to have a black or brown body and may be difficult to distinguish from black, dun, chestnut, or brown, but all smoky blacks will have at least one parent with a dilute gene. Smoky black is produced by the action of a single cream dilution gene on a black base. The dilution of a single dose of cream may not be apparent, or may be very subtle, on a black base.

Cremello – ivory colored coat in shades that range from very light to darker cream color. Mane and tail are ivory or flaxen. Cremellos always have light pinkish skin and blue or bluish green eyes. Cremello is produced by two cream dilution genes (i.e. both parents must be a single or double dilution color) on a chestnut base. It may be difficult to distinguish visually from perlino and smoky cream.

Perlino – ivory colored coat in shades that range from very light to darker cream color. Ivory mane and tail may be slightly darker than body color. Perlinos will always have very light pinkish skin and blue or bluish green eyes. Points may be a shade darker than its body coat. Perlino is produced by the action of two cream dilution genes (i.e. both parents must have either one or two cream dilution genes) on a bay base. It may be difficult to distinguish from cremello and smoky cream.

Smoky cream – ivory colored coat, with or without black overtones. Ivory mane and tail may be slightly darker than body color. Smoky cream will always have very light pinkish skin and blue or bluish green eyes. Points may be a shade darker than its body coat. Smoky cream is produced by the action of two cream dilution genes (i.e. both parents must be a single or double dilution color) on a black base. It may be difficult to distinguish visually between cremello and perlino.

Dun – a dilution gene that lightens both red and black hair on the horse's body. All dun horses MUST have at least one dun parent. Since dun closely resembles buckskin when present on a horse with a bay base, it's common to hear buckskin and dun used interchangeably. However, only the dun gene also causes the presence of primitive markings, which are a shade or two darker than the body color. Primitive markings include a dorsal stripe (a dark line that extends from the base of the mane to the base of the tail); zebra stripes (horizontal marks on the legs that may be difficult to see on darker shades and they generally fade as they reach the lower part of the leg) or leg barring; cobwebbing (darker rings or stripes on the forehead); or a shoulder stripe (a dark stripe across the withers over to the shoulders. The dun gene on a black base is called

grulla (females) or grullo (males). As with the other base colors diluted by the dun gene, the mane, tail, and legs on will be black on a grulla/grullo, although the lower part of the legs might be slightly faded.

Flaxen – a modifier that causes the mane and tail on a chestnut horse to be white to cream in color. Flaxen doesn't always affect the mane and tail equally. It is possible for either the mane or tail to be lightened while the other is not.

Silver – The Silver dilution gene dilutes black pigment but has no effect on red pigment. The main and tail are lightened to flaxen or silver gray and may darken on some horses as they age. A solid black horse with this gene will be chocolate colored with a lightened mane and tail. A bay horse will have the black pigment on the lower legs, mane and tail lightened. Sometimes bay horses with silver dilution can be mistaken for chestnuts with a flaxen mane and tail. Silver dilution is inherited as a dominant trait.

Gray – The Gray gene causes progressive depigmentation of the hair, often resulting in a coat color that is almost completely white by the age of 6 – 8 years. Horses that inherit progressive Gray can be born any color, then begin to gradually show white hairs mixed with the colored throughout the body. Usually the first signs of gray hair can be found on the head, particularly around the eyes. Gray is dominant, therefore a single copy of this gene will cause a horse to turn gray. A gray horse MUST have at least one gray parent. If a horse has two copies of Gray, all offspring of this horse will be gray. Research indicates that horses with one copy of Gray often retain some of the original pigment while homozygotes tend to progress to almost completely white.

Roan – a color pattern caused by white hairs mixed with colored hairs over the horse's body. Points on the front legs, the horse's head, and the mane and tail are darker than the body. Pattern is present from birth and shows seasonal variation. Roans MUST have at least one roan parent. Horses with patches of roaning on the body and without the classic dark head, leg, mane, and tail color are not classic roans; these are coat markings.

Pinto – white above the knees or hocks, white body spots, and bold white face markings in any combination or singly. The skin under the white areas is pink. This category includes 4 types – sabino, frame overo, splashed white, and tobiano (not found in Morgans to date). Photos should be supplied with registration application or request for change of color.

- Sabino: the most common expression of sabino in Morgans is high white stockings, a wide strip or blaze that wraps around the chin, and perhaps one or two belly spots or a detached, irregular patch of white on one leg. The markings are often blotchy or roany; in some cases, the entire horse can be roany with few actual markings. Leg markings are crisp on some sabinos and irregular with jagged edges extending up the leg on others. Blue eyes are not commonly seen with this pattern. The mane and tail may have white or silver hairs.
- Frame overo: a pinto pattern characterized by dark legs (unless sabino is present), a bald face, and white markings on the neck and sides that are "framed" by the base color. It can be present on any base color. White originates along the side of the neck, along the flank, and on the face. A frame overo MUST have at least one frame overo parent.
- Splash white: white patterns originate from the bottom. This pattern will sometimes have only a "bottom-heavy" face marking, often with a lopsided snip. May have one or two blue eyes. Homozygous animals tend to have more flamboyant white body markings, which will have smooth edges and spread upwards from the underside of the body. The horse looks as though it was dipped in white paint. They often have a white or white-tipped tail.