Horse Breeds

There are over 230 breeds of horses and ponies. ***The term "breed" is used to describe horses who have been bred selectively over a period of time and who have, as a result, developed fixed characteristics.***

Many breeds fall into one of the following three groups: **hotblood, warmblood**, or **coldblood**. These terms do not indicate the actual temperature of a horse's blood, but rather describe the breed's temperament (personality). Hotbloods are lively, high-spirited horses and are generally among the fastest. The Arab and the Thoroughbred are hot-blooded horses. The cold-blooded horses are the large, heavy-boned draft breeds, which are usually quiet, calm, and easy going. The Clydesdale, Belgian Draft and Percheron are cold-blooded horses. The warmbloods, as the term suggests, are in many ways a combination of the two—in breeding (they are often cross-breeds) and in temperament.

Breeds have evolved over time, with the work which people needed their horses to perform being the biggest influencing factor. (***Those who needed fast transportation bred for speed, while others who needed to move heavy loads bred for strength).*** Some equines are better classified as horses or ponies, while sometimes a uniquely colored coat best describes a certain breed of horse. The following examples are only a handful of popular horse breeds.

Arabian: (pictured above)

Arabians are the oldest pure breed of horses. They are small horses (14.2hh-15hh), high spirited and intelligent. Breed characteristics include a deeply dished (curved-in) head, large, widely spaced eyes, fine skin and coat, long, arched neck, high tail carriage, short back, flaring nostrils and dainty muzzle.

The Arabian breed comes from North Africa and the Middle East. These horses have been depicted in ancient art in the Arabian Peninsula as long ago as 2,000 to 3,000 B.C. Just like their ancestors, whom lived in the desert, the Arabian horse easily adapts to harsh environments.

They have great ability in endurance, soundness and the ability to survive on small rations of feed.

Today, not only are they used in the show ring but are also very popular as endurance horses. Arabians are known for their stamina (ability to travel long distances without tiring). Although a graceful and majestic breed, the Arabian temperament can be flighty and nervous.

Thoroughbreds were first bred as race horses in England. Thoroughbreds are the descendants of the Darley Arabian, the Byerly Turk and the Godolphin Arabian. Thoroughbreds are usually lean horses, ranging in height from 15-17 hands. They have silky coats and come in all solid colors, often with white markings on their faces and legs. Other breed characteristics include a refine head with wide-set intelligent eyes, long light neck, well muscled sloping shoulders and muscular hind end. They are tall, long-legged, fast, sensitive and powerful with good endurance and long, low strides.

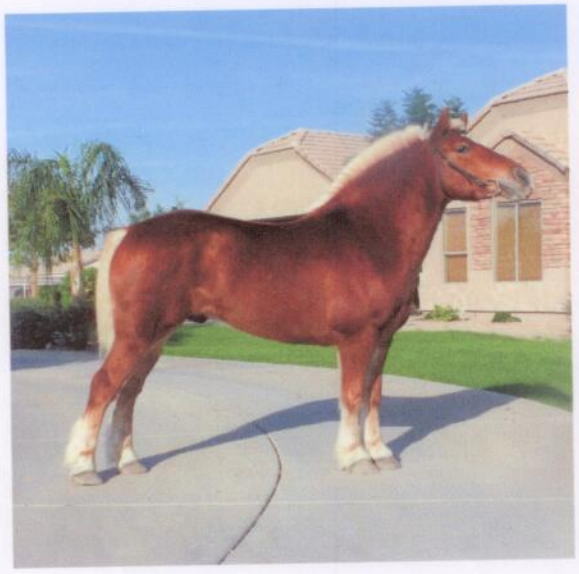
←Secretariat

Their stamina and eagerness makes them excellent candidates for the racetrack, in the hunting fields or for three day eventing. Thoroughbreds are best known as racehorses. If a thoroughbred has a lip tattoo, he is registered with the Jockey Club and most likely raced at some point in his early life. The term ***"OTTB"*** stands for ***"Off the Track Thoroughbred".***

Although Thoroughbreds move fast and make great jumpers, they can be high-strung and nervous.

Belgian Draft Horse: These big, strong horses have short legs compared to their bodies, large heads, and powerful hindquarters. They have some ***feathering(a fringe of hair)*** on their legs and feet. Today the breed is known for its bright chestnut or sorrel color: golden red with a flaxen (cream colored) mane and tail. A white stripe on the nose and four white socks are often seen on Belgians. These horses are tall, ranging from 16-18 hands.

As the name suggests, this breed comes from Belgium, where farmers bred strong horses to pull their plows. A long time ago, the Belgian carried knights (wearing heavy armor) into battle. Belgians make good carriage horses and can impressively pull loads of over 3,000 pounds!



Warmblood: Not just one breed but a group of breeds that were created in Europe by crossing hot blooded horses such as Thoroughbreds and Arabians with cold blooded draft horses. They are tall, strong and athletic and bred for jumping, dressage, and driving. Within the Warmblood group, there are seven breeds that are most common. They are the Hanoverian, Holsteiner, Oldenburg, Selle Francais, Swedish Warmblood, Trakehner, and Dutch Warmblood. Each one has a unique history and characteristics.

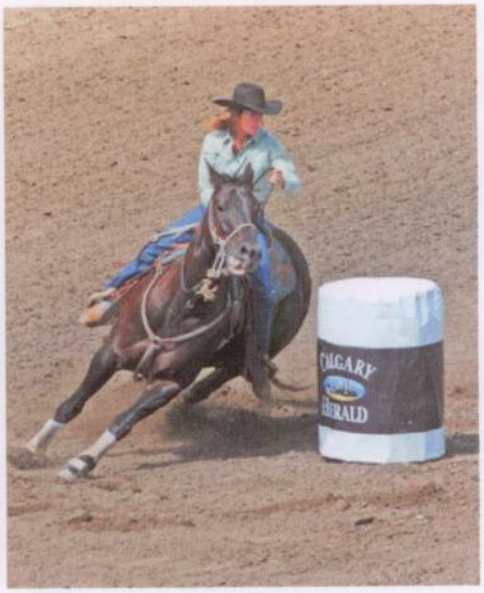
Trakehner: Trakehners (16-17 hands) have small heads set on long necks. Their bodies are strong and lean, with long legs. ***The Trakehner is closest to the Thoroughbred type than the other warmbloods.*** These German horses were bred from Thoroughbred and Arabian studs with

native mares. Trakehners were first used as cavalry horses. Their strong hindquarters make them excellent hunters, jumpers and dressage horses.

**The breed was almost wiped out during World War II. When the Russians took control of Trakehner, Prussia, the Germans were forced out. Less than 10% of the horses survived the evacuation across a 600 mile retreat across the Krische Haff (a frozen bay of the Baltic Sea) in mid-winter.

Oldenburgs are also tall horses (approx. 16-17 hands). They are usually dark in color (brown, black or bay), have a fairly plain head with an occasional Roman (rounded) nose. They have a powerfully built body with a deep chest and have a strong muscular back with a high set tail upon large, toned hindquarters. ***Oldenburgs are the heaviest of the German Warmbloods***. They were originally bred as a coach horse. Due to breeding with thoroughbreds and Selle Francais, the once stocky coach-horse has developed into a finer breed. Oldenburgs are popular in dressage, show jumping and eventing.

American Quarter Horse: A breed that excels at sprinting short distances. Its name comes from its ability to outrun other horses in races of a quarter mile and under. Breed characteristics include a small, short, refined head, powerful hindquarters and a wide muscular chest to match. They usually measure between 14-16 hands high. While mostly thought of as a Western horse, Quarter horses also race, jump and do dressage.



Quarter horses were first bred in the Virginia colonies. Heavy English workhorses were crossed with quick Indian ponies to produce a horse with speed and power. As settlers moved west, they took their Quarter Horses with them and discovered that they made excellent cow horses. The American Quarter Horse is the most popular breed in the United States today, and the American Quarter Horse Association (AQHA) is the largest breed registry in the world. Many of the color breeds are also Quarter Horses.

Color Breeds

Horses and ponies with unusual or exotic coat colors and patterns have occurred throughout history and have usually been highly valued (regardless of the horse's breeding). For the more popular color types, some countries have established registries, recognizing horses by their **color breed.**

A **Palomino** has a golden coat with a white or cream mane and tail, making it an extremely eye-catching horse. Some breeds the PHBA (Palomino Horse Breeders of America) accepts are Morgans, Quarter Horses and Tennessee Walking Horses.

The PHBA (Palomino Horse Breeders of America) admits Palomino horses standing between 14-17 hands high. Although there are numerous requirements in order for a Palomino to be PHBA approved, one of them is that the horse must not show any pony of draft horse characteristics.

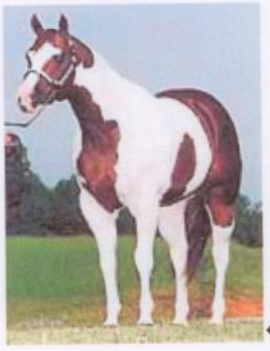
Appaloosa: Originally bred as Indian ponies in the northwestern part of the United States. They are known for their spotted coloring and striped hooves, sparse mane and tail, muzzle and **sclera** (white ring) around the eye. They are used for many different disciplines such as western, English, jumping, trail and pleasure riding. (USHJA)

The Appaloosa takes its name from the Palouse River in Oregon, home of the Nez Perce Tribe, who first bred these horses from Spanish Stock. The Appaloosa's spots make him easy to identify.

The Pinto (sometimes called the **Paint Horse**) differs from the Appaloosa in that his spots are large patches of color. There are two types of Pinto spot patterns: the **overo** and **tobiano**, and two colors: piebald (black and white) and skewbald (brown and white). Pinto coloring may be found in many breeds. Native Americans favored Pintos because they had built-in camouflage. Like appaloosas, pintos were bred in the Western states.

A Paint must have registered American Quarter Horse or Thoroughbred parents. All Paints are Pintos, but not all Pintos are Paints (since Pintos may be of any breed or combination of breeds). The **Tobiano** Paint has the most common spotting pattern, characterized by rounded markings and the legs are usually white, and spots usually cross the topline somewhere between the ears and the tail.

The **Overo** Paint is characterized by its sharp, irregular markings, usually more dark than white. The white might look like its framed by the dominant color



←Tobiano

Overo→

PONY BREEDS

A **pony** is a small horse, "small" usually meaning no higher at the withers than about 14.2hh (a hand is 4 inches). Ponies have very distinct characteristics, which include a proportionately short leg in relationship to the rest of the body. Ponies, specifically the Mountain and Moorland breeds of Britain and Ireland, have existed in isolation on their island homes for many years. Ponies are extraordinarily strong in relation to their size. Because of the environment they lived in (rocky footing, harsh weather conditions…), ponies are tough, sure-footed, and are able to exist on small amounts of food.

Welsh Pony: One of the most popular show ponies of all is the Welsh Mountain pony. The breed originated as a mountain pony in Wales, acquired Arabian and Thoroughbred blood, and was bred widely in other parts of the world. There are two kinds of Welsh ponies: the sturdy and stocky **Welsh Cob** (or small horse) and the more refined **Welsh Pony**. Both show the Arabian influence in the dished face and dainty muzzle. They have short backs, strong legs, and rounded hindquarters. They come in all solid colors but are most often grey. White markings are prevalent, but not pinto coloring. Welsh ponies can range from 12 hands to over 13.2 hands high. Welsh ponies can be used for just about any discipline. They are known for their natural jumping ability and ground covering trot. They can also be used in harness.

←Welsh Pony Welsh Cob→

Shetland Pony:

Shetlands measure no higher than 42 inches at the withers. These ponies come in all colors except for appaloosa-type spots. They have thick coats and long, heavy manes and tails. Their faces are somewhat dished, with small ears and large, expressive eyes.

Shetlands are amazingly strong and can carry greater weights in proportion to his size than any other breed (can pull twice their own weight!). Shetlands used to pull plows and heavy carts. They even worked in coal mines. Now, the Shetland pony is a popular children's pony and family pet. Even though Shetlands are small, they are especially clever and are known to take advantage of a lazy or unkind rider.