

Coat Patterns

POA coat patterns vary widely and, over time, some ponies get additional color. One of the most common colorations is a blanket pattern, which is characterized by white over the loin and hips with dark, round, g-shaped spots. These spots may vary in size from tiny specks to spots four or more inches in diameter. Others will show white over the hips without dark spots. This variation on the blanket pattern is known as snow-capped.



Some animals carry the spotting over their entire body, which is commonly referred to as a leopard pattern. Leopard ponies with sparsely spotted coats are appropriately termed few-spot leopards.

In both blanket and leopard patterns, the spots may be darker in the middle with a lighter ring surrounding the spot. This unique look is called a halo.



Ponies that have white hairs mixed in with the base coat color are said to be roan. Often associated with this coat pattern variation are the descriptive terms red, blue and marbled roans. Roan POAs often show varnish marks which are darker areas appearing most often on the upper legs, point of the hip, bridge of the nose, and on the cheek bones. These dark patches have smooth edges that gradually blend into the hair in the surrounding area. Irregular edges on patches of white or dark hair are indicative of a paint or pinto coat pattern, which are expressly prohibited in the POA registry.



Mottled Skin

The primary characteristic after the coat pattern is mottled skin. Mottled or parti-colored skin is unique to the Appaloosa and POA. Because of this, it is a decisive indicator of a POA. Different from commonly found pink skin (as found under blazes and stockings) mottled skin is a speckled or blotchy pattern of pigmented and non-pigmented skin.



There are several places on a pony where mottled skin can be seen easily. These are the eyes, muzzle, udder or sheath and anus or vulva. The mottled skin found on the eyes and muzzle will often have a different appearance than that which is found in the genital area. As our photo shows, the mottled skin on the muzzle and around the eyes is a speckled combination of pigmented and non-pigmented skin. The mottled skin found on the genitals is more of a blotchy pattern of pigmented and non-pigmented skin.



When searching for mottled skin, the lips of the pony should not be separated, as all horses and ponies have a line between pigmented and non-pigmented skin on their lips. POA mottled skin should show good contrast between dark and light areas. Other breeds of horses and ponies can have simple

differences in pigmentation of certain areas and should not be considered examples of mottled skin. These differences are often found on the underside of the tail, penis or the upper inside of the legs.

The POAC Official Handbook states that marginal, gray or roan ponies must have mottled skin in at least two places -- muzzle, eyes or genital area -- and white sclera encircling one or both eyes, to qualify for tentative or permanent registration status. Since a pony must be tentatively or permanently registered in order to show, these same requirements must be met for a pony to be allowed to show at an approved POA show.

White Sclera & Striped Hooves

There are two other characteristics of the POA which can be readily identified but, under certain circumstances, can be found in other breeds. Consequently, the POA owner needs to know what to look for in determining a POA characteristic.

White sclera on a POA is usually very visible. All horses and ponies have sclera; it is the area of the eye which encircles the iris (the colored or pigmented portion). The POA's sclera is white and usually readily visible. All horses and ponies can show white around the eye if it is rolled back, up and down, or if the eyelid is lifted. When looking for POA characteristics, keep the pony's head in a normal, relaxed position.



Bold, clearly defined vertically light or dark stripes on the hooves are another POA characteristic. Because there are several factors which can influence the striping of hooves, the owner must look carefully in determining POA stripes. Striping can be caused by an injury to the coronet band or a dark spot in the coronet band of a pony with a white sock. These kinds of striping should not be considered when looking for POA-type characteristics. In the photo of the pony with the white right hind ankle, the dark spots in the coronet band are creating the stripes on the hoof and cannot be considered.



It is possible a POA will not exhibit any striping on its hooves. For this reason, the other characteristics of mottled skin and white sclera are the primary ones to look for in identifying the POA.

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