

DISCOVERING THE FEWCAP

Like the two friends in the story, we encountered the “which is it” question early on in our research and also disagreed. After many discussions, we concluded that we’d identified a new homozygous pattern. The Appaloosas we were questioning had nearly 100-percent color production and the required Appaloosa x Appaloosa parentage with at least one leopard in the pedigree.

For lack of a better term, we called it a “combo” pattern because it exhibited markings similar to both few-spots and snowcaps yet didn’t really fit the descriptions of either one.

However, the term “combo” wasn’t acceptable, so we finally settled on what combo suggested anyway: fewcap—a distinctive homozygous pattern produced from a mixing of leopard and blanketed ancestors.

While the few-spot leopard pattern is produced from leopard breeding even though some ancestors may have blankets, and while the snowcap pattern often has leopards somewhere in the pedigree, the fewcap represents a combination of both pattern markings. Fewcaps aren’t rare, but aren’t as common as few-spots or snowcaps.

LEOPARDS AND BLANKETS

Some may be surprised to learn that blanket patterns were the preferred pattern type in the ApHC’s early years and were far more common than leopard patterns. In fact, as late as the 1970s, a survey of *Appaloosa News* readers found that the blanket was the favorite pattern type.

We don’t know how or when the leopard pattern first appeared on the Appaloosa scene, but have found no evidence that the Nez Perce had leopard Appaloosas.

We do know that blanket patterns were far more common to the early Appaloosas in the Pacific Northwest, and are continuing to research how, when and where bona fide leopards entered breeding programs, particularly in Montana, Wyoming and Colorado.

We suspect that the leopard pattern

may well have originated outside the Palouse region and from non-Nez Perce Appaloosa stock. We’re still trying to identify the area where the first known few-spot leopard appeared. At some point, however, leopards mixed with blankets to produce the fewcap pattern.

FEWCAP: IDENTIFYING CHARACTERISTICS

Accurate identification of the fewcap pattern is sometimes difficult precisely because its markings resemble both few-spot and snowcap. When examined carefully, however, the fewcap exhibits characteristics that differentiate or distinguish it from both the few-spot and snowcap.

Fewcaps aren’t rare, but aren’t as common as few-spots or snowcaps.

While not common to every fewcap, the following characteristics occur in various combinations and represent the defining phenotypic (visible) indicators of the fewcap pattern:

- At least one leopard ancestor somewhere in the pedigree
- A solid-colored or partial roan neck, extending from the crest or top of the neck to the shoulder line or point of the shoulder (See photos A and D)
- Solid or dark markings around the elbow but often extending higher up on shoulder/heart girth than what’s found on a few-spot (See photos E and F)
- Vertical rib striping, also known as bars or jail bars, near the heart girth, sometimes toward the front of the barrel and extending upward to just below the withers (See photo A)
- Solid markings at the flank (like the few-spot), but often more pronounced at the elbow (See photos E and F)
- Often a dark-colored head or greater smattering of darker areas than on a few-spot, but similar to the dark head found



Photo A



Photo B



Photo C



Photo D