

# Riding Horse Breed Types and Uses

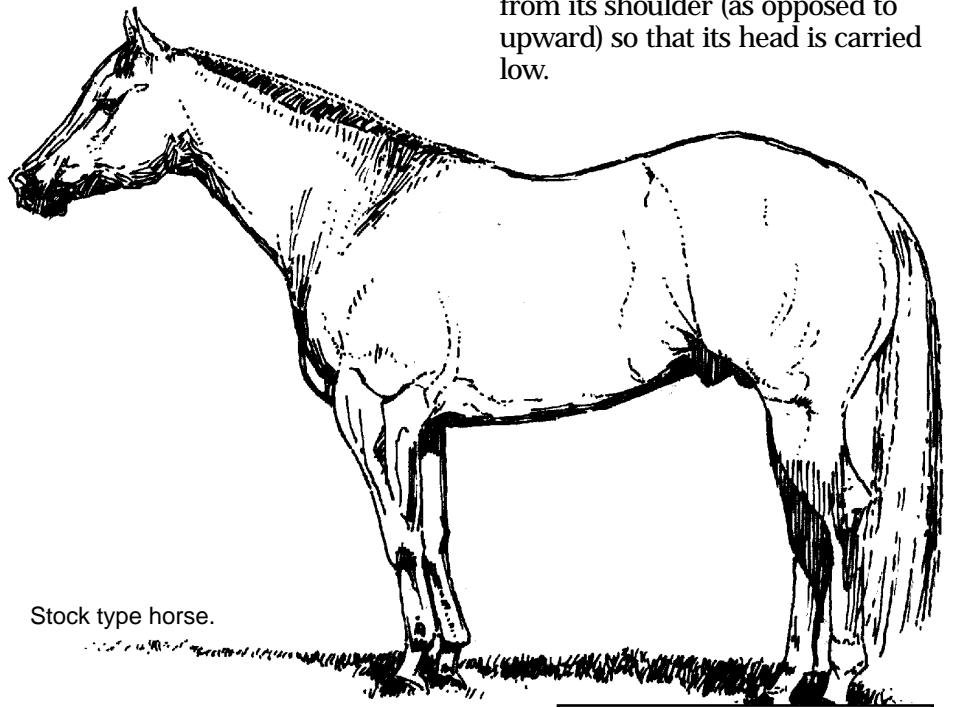
Riding horses are selected from many different breeds. Horses within a breed usually have a common origin and have traits that set them apart from other breeds of horses. Different riding horse breeds have been developed to perform different jobs under saddle. For example, some breeds usually are used as race horses, and other breeds are used as high-stepping show horses. Some breeds are noted for a particular coat color. Certain breeds are known for their superiority in a particular activity. However, this does not prevent individuals from a breed noted for one activity from excelling in an unrelated activity. Most of the horses in a certain breed usually will have the build and temperament to do a particular job. This means that most animals in a breed will follow a certain "type." A horse's type is determined by its build, or conformation, which in turn helps determine what kind of job the horse might perform well.

This publication explains the major light (riding) horse types and discusses some of the breeds commonly found in each of those types. Many light horse breeds that are popular in other countries, or that are beginning to gain popularity in the United States, will not be discussed. Also draft (work) horse breeds and pony breeds will not be covered here.

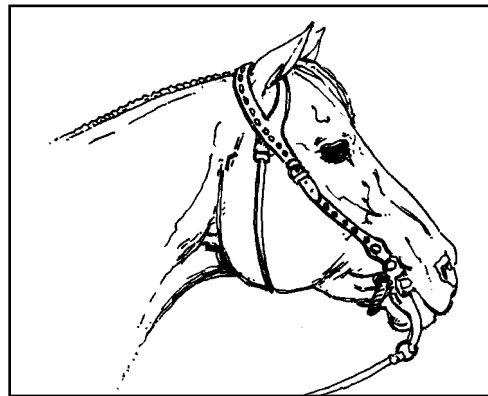
## Stock Type

A stock type horse is built for ranch work. Stock horses usually have a muscular build with mas-

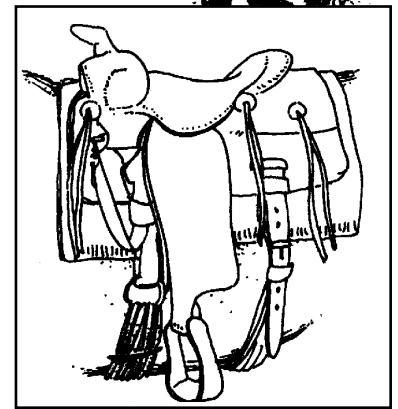
sive muscles in the shoulders, forearms, and hindquarters. They have short, strong backs and medium-length legs. The stock horse's neck should come forward from its shoulder (as opposed to upward) so that its head is carried low.



Stock type horse.



One ear bridle.



Western saddle.

The stock horse should move with a relaxed, soft stride with its feet close to the ground. Stock horses can start, stop, and turn quickly, and they have a lot of speed for short-distance sprints. Stock horses are noted for their calm, quiet dispositions. They are used as ranch horses, trail horses, pleasure horses, and show horses for western events such as Western pleasure, roping, cutting, and reining. They are used for short distance racing and contests that require speed and agility, such as barrel racing (racing around three barrels set in a cloverleaf pattern). Stock horses are usually ridden with a western style (or stock seat) saddle and bridle. Typical breeds of stock horses are the American Quarter Horse, the Appaloosa, and the Paint.

The **Quarter Horse breed** was developed in colonial America in Virginia and the Carolinas. The Quarter Horse was developed as a general purpose horse that could be used for riding and farm work. However, the breed name came from the horse's ability to run short distance races that were about  $\frac{1}{4}$  mile in length. The horse was further developed in the Southwest into a dependable stock horse, and it is known for its "cow sense" or ability to work with cattle. Today the Quarter Horse is the most popular breed in America based on the number of horses registered. The Quarter Horse usually has a short, broad head with large jaws and small ears. It is a muscular horse, usually standing 14.3 to 16 hands tall (one hand equals 4 inches; a 14.3 hand horse would be 14 hands and 3 inches) at the withers (top of the shoulders) and weighs 1,000 to 1,250 pounds. Because Quarter Horse racing has become increasingly popular, the breed has developed two distinct types of horses in recent years. The short, stocky typical Quarter Horse is used for ranch work and pleasure. A taller, leaner horse that is more suitable for racing is the second type. The racing type Quarter Horse has been developed by adding Thoroughbred genes to the Quarter Horse breed.

The **Appaloosa breed** was developed by the Nez Perce Indians in the American Northwest. The body build and size of the Appaloosa is similar to the Quarter Horse, but the Appaloosa has a spotted coat color. The spots may be dark spots on a white coat, white spots on a dark coat, or a dark coat with a white "blanket" over the horse's hips and back. In addition to the spotted color pattern, the Appaloosa should also have three other distinct characteristics:

- The eyes should be circled with white like the human eye.
- The hooves should be striped with black and white vertical stripes.
- The skin should be mottled with irregular black and white spots.

The color pattern of the Appaloosa does not breed true; that is, foals born to Appaloosa parents do not always have an appaloosa color pattern. Also, Appaloosas sometimes have a "rat-tailed" condition where there is very little hair in the mane and tail. Appaloosas are known for their endurance and surefootedness.

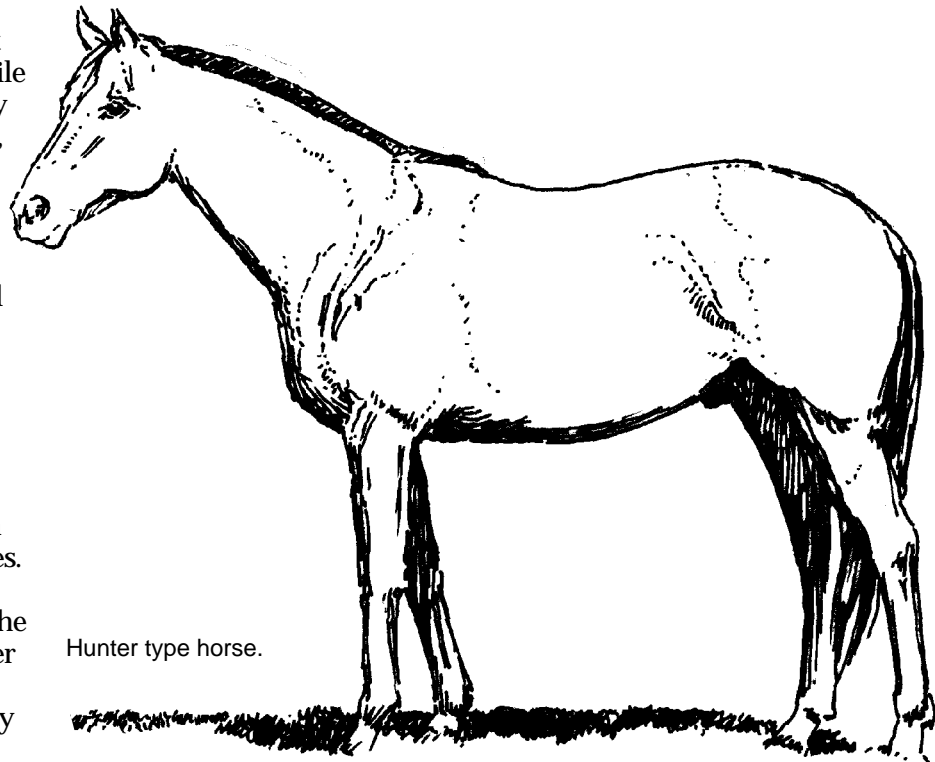
The **Paint Horse breed** also has a spotted coat color. It differs from the Appaloosa in that the paint color pattern (also called pinto) has large spots that often run together where the Appaloosa spots are smaller and separate. The Paint Horse breed was formed to register horses of Quarter Horse breeding with the paint color pattern, so the body build and size of these two breeds are very similar. Like the appaloosa color pattern, the paint color does not breed true.

# Hunter Type

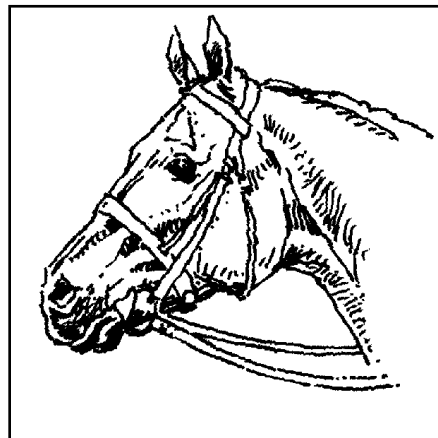
The hunter type horse is built to carry riders cross-country while hunting foxes with hounds. They have a longer, leaner body build, longer legs, and a longer neck than a stock type horse. The hunter's neck should come forward and slightly upward from the shoulder so that its head will be carried higher than that of a stock horse. A hunter will not have the massive muscling typically seen in a stock horse but should have long, smooth muscling.

The hunter should move with long, low, ground-covering strides. It should have lots of stamina to gallop long distances following the hunt. Besides fox hunting, hunter type horses are jumped in horse shows and used for cross-country riding, polo, racing, and steeplechasing (racing over fences). Hunters are usually ridden with an English style saddle, termed a forward seat or hunt seat saddle. The typical hunter breed is the Thoroughbred.

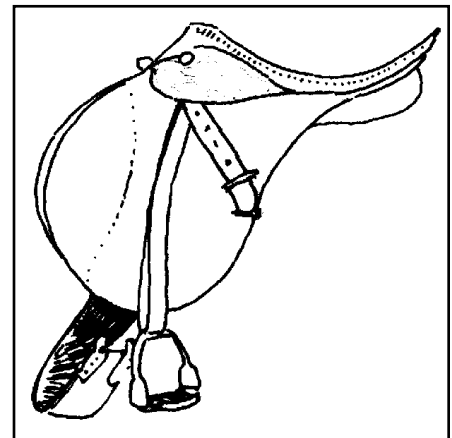
The **Thoroughbred breed** was developed in England as a race horse for intermediate distances. It was developed by crossing native English horses with Arabians. Most Thoroughbreds can trace their ancestry to three or four Arabian stallions imported into England in the late 1600s and early 1700s. The breed name, Thoroughbred, is often confused with the term "purebred." Purebred refers to any animal whose ancestors are all from the same breed. With horses, Thoroughbred refers to a specific breed. Thoroughbreds are usually between 15 and 16.3 hands high and weigh 1,000 to 1,400 pounds. They are noted for their speed, athletic ability, and desire to win.



Hunter type horse.



Hunting snaffle bridle.



English saddle.

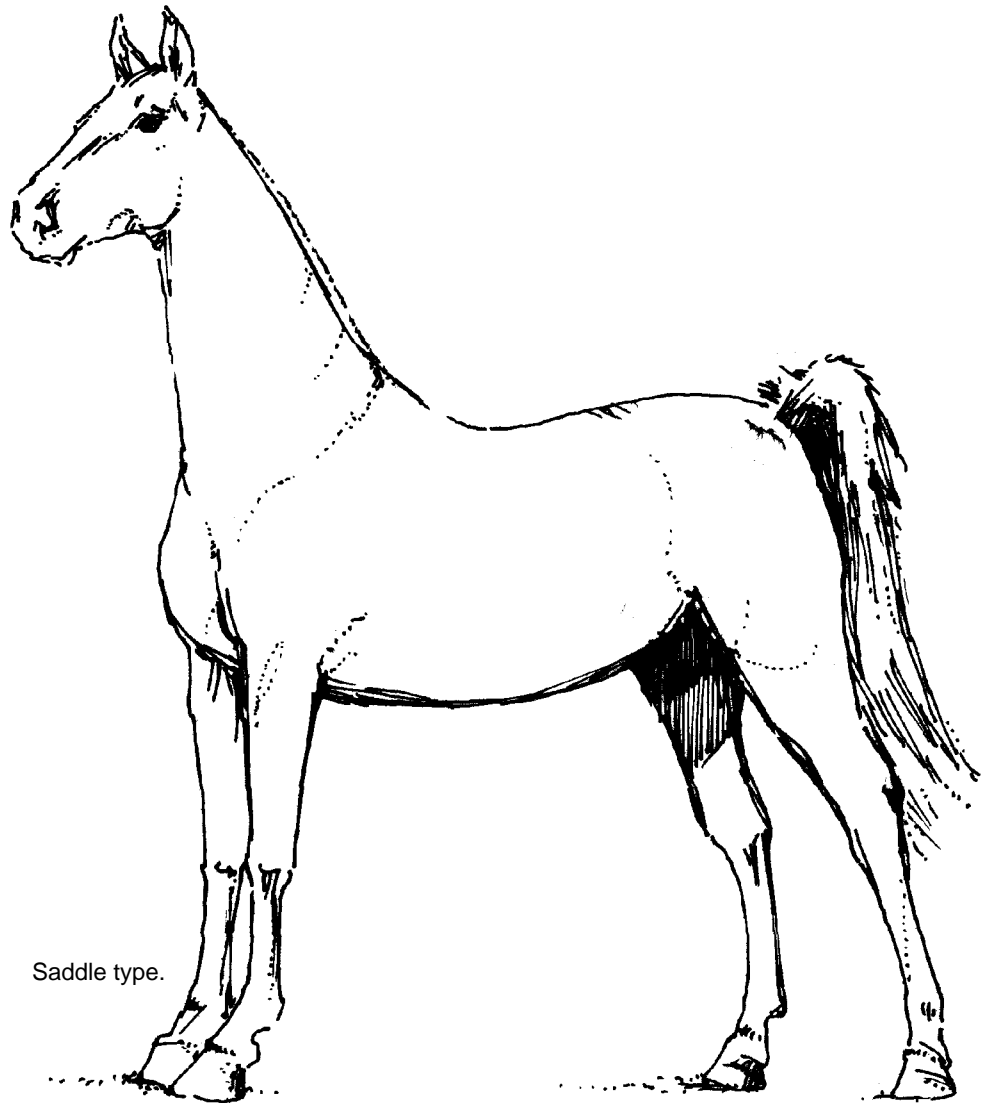
Their temperament generally is considered more nervous than a stock-type horse. Thoroughbreds have been used to increase the speed, athletic ability, and refinement of many breeds of horses in the world and in the development of many other breeds, such as the American Quarter Horse, the American Saddlebred, the Standardbred, and the Morgan.

# Saddle Type

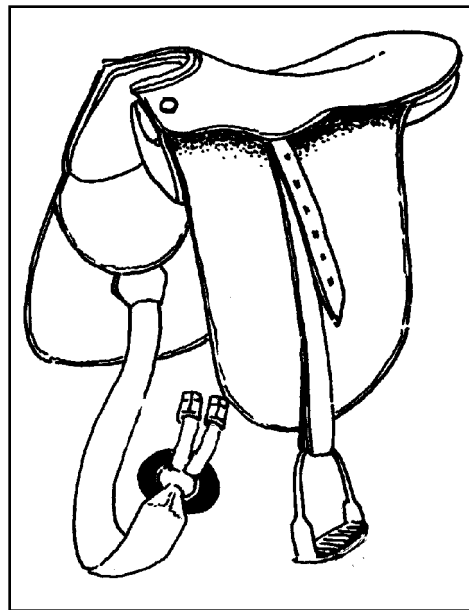
The saddle type horse is built for pleasure riding and showing. Saddle horses tend to be more refined with lighter bones and muscling than either the stock type or hunter type horse. Saddle horses have long necks that come straight up from the horse's shoulder, rather than forward, resulting in a high head carriage. Their legs are long compared to the depth of their body.

A saddle horse should have a lively way of moving with its feet lifted high off the ground with each step. The saddle horse should be comfortable and pleasant to ride. It should give the appearance of being a spirited horse that is easily controlled by the rider. Usually saddle horses are ridden in an English style (saddle seat) saddle, called a park saddle or flat saddle. For showing, this saddle is modified so the rider is seated farther toward the horse's hindquarters. The show version of the saddle is called a cut-back or a Lane Fox show saddle. Typical breeds of saddle horses are the American Saddlebred, Morgan, and Arabian. Tennessee Walking Horses and Racking Horses also fit into the saddle horse type, even though their body build is heavier and their gaits are different from the other saddle horse breeds.

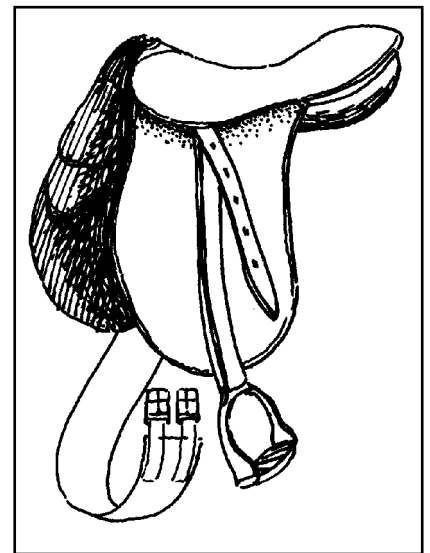
The American Saddlebred was developed in the Virginias, Tennessee, Kentucky, and Missouri as an easy-riding, general purpose plantation horse. Thoroughbred, Morgan, Arabian, and trotting and pacing horses were used to develop the breed. The Saddlebred is known as the "peacock of the horse world." It has a long arched neck with a high head carriage, a short back that is level from the withers to the tail, long legs, a high tail set, and flashy gaits. Saddlebreds are usually 15 to 16 hands tall and weigh 1,000 to 1,200 pounds.



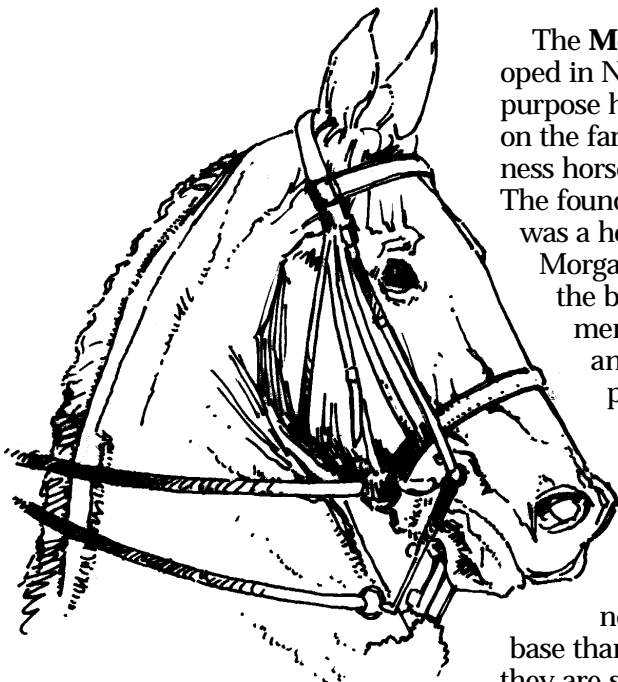
Saddle type.



Cut back or Lane Fox show saddle.



Park or flat saddle.



Full double or weymouth bridle, saddle seat show type.

The breed has both three-gaited horses and five-gaited horses. The three-gaited Saddlebred performs a springy, four-beat, flat-footed walk, a high-stepping, two-beat trot, and a slow, smooth, three-beat canter. The five-gaited horse has two additional gaits, the slow gait and the rack. The slow gait is a slow, high action, four-beat gait, and the rack is a fast, flashy, four-beat gait in which each foot supports the horse's body weight separately. Saddlebred show horses give the appearance of being almost uncontrollable, but they are actually gentle, easily handled horses.

The **Morgan breed** was developed in New England as a general purpose horse that could be used on the farm or as a trotting harness horse and as a saddle horse. The foundation sire for the breed was a horse called "Justin

Morgan" after its owner. Today the breed shows more refinement than original Morgans and is mainly used as a pleasure and show horse.

Morgans have a high head carriage, a short back that is level from the withers to the tail, and a long, sloping shoulder. Their necks are wider at the

base than the Saddlebred's, and they are smaller than the Saddlebred. They are usually 14.1 to 15.1 hands tall and weigh 1,000 to 1,200 pounds. Morgans are known for their quiet attitudes and their sturdiness. Morgan horses have been used in the development of the Saddlebred and Quarter Horse breeds.

The **Arabian breed** was developed in the deserts of the Mideast and northern Africa and is probably the oldest breed of horse in the world. Many breeds of riding horses have Arabians in their backgrounds, often through the Thoroughbred breed, which was developed using Arabians. Today the Arabian is used as a show horse, race horse, and endurance horse. Arabians excel at endurance riding, which is long distance cross-country racing.

Arabians are smaller than most other breeds of riding horses, standing 14 to 15.1 hands tall and weighing between 800 and 1,000 pounds. Arabians have a distinctive head shape. Their head should be small, with a large eye, small muzzle, and a "dish" below their eyes, giving the horse a concave profile. The Arabian should have a long, arched neck, a short back that is level from the withers to tail, and a high tail carriage. It

is widely believed that Arabians have only five lumbar vertebrae in their backbone, rather than the usual six found in most horses, giving Arabians a shorter, stronger back. However, research studies have shown that the percentage of Arabians with only five lumbar vertebrae is the same as the percentage found in each horse breed.

The **Tennessee Walking Horse** and the **Racking Horse** are similar in ancestry and body type but have different gaits. The Tennessee Walking Horse was developed in Tennessee as a general purpose plantation horse for riding, driving, and farm work.

Thoroughbreds, Standardbreds, Saddlebreds, Morgans, and trotting and pacing harness horses were used in developing the breed. Racking Horses were developed directly from the Tennessee Walking Horse breed. Both breeds are popular as show horses, pleasure horses, and trail horses. Both breeds average 15.2 hands in height and are about 1,000 pounds in weight. They are similar to the Saddlebred in body conformation, but they have larger bones, heavier muscles, and thicker necks than Saddlebreds. They also will usually have a more sloping rump and a sharper angle in their hocks than Saddlebreds.

The Tennessee Walking Horse and the Racking Horse have a natural overstride. That is, the hind foot will land in front of the print left by the front foot. In show horses, this overstride can be more than 50 inches. The gaits of the Tennessee Walking Horse are the walk, running walk, and canter. During the running walk, each foot will hit the ground separately at regular intervals. The front feet should be lifted high off the ground and the back feet should stay close to the ground, so that the horse looks like it is pulling with its front feet and driving under its body with its back feet. The breed shows a distinct nodding head action at the running walk. Racking horses are shown at the walk, slow rack, and fast rack. The footfall pattern for the rack is similar to the Saddlebred's rack, however, the appearance of the gait is different. Racking Horse breeders stress that the rack must be a natural gait with no nodding head motion. The hocks should move forward rather than upward so the hind feet stay close to the ground.

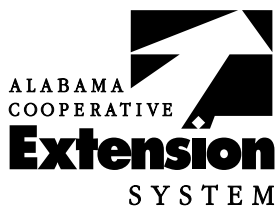
## Other Breeds

A light horse breed that fits the hunter-type body build but is not generally considered a riding horse is the **Standardbred**. The Standardbred is raced under harness at either a trot or pace. The trot is a two-beat gait in which diagonal (on opposite sides of the body) front and hind legs move together. The pace is a two-beat gait in which the horse's lateral (on the same side of the body) legs move together. The breed name comes from the practice of registering any horse that could trot or pace a mile in a standard time when the breed was being developed. The Standardbred was developed in America from Thoroughbred, Morgan, and trotting and pacing breeds. Its body build is similar to the Thoroughbred with a larger head, longer body, and shorter legs.

The **Palomino breed** is a color breed in which horses are registered according to their color rather than their type and ancestry. The palomino body color is golden with a white mane and tail. Although the majority of Palominos are stock horse type, hunter and saddle type horses of registered parents with the palomino color can also be registered. Like most color breeds, the palomino color pattern will not breed true.

The **Pinto breed** is also a color breed that will register horses with the pinto body color that are from purebred parents. Pintos can be registered as stock type, hunter type, pleasure type (Arabians and Morgans), or saddle type (Saddlebreds and Tennessee Walking Horses). Although pinto and paint refer to the same color pattern, the Paint breed will register only stock type horses.

Many other horse and pony breeds can be found in the United States, and many foreign breeds are being imported. This circular presented a basic description of the three main types of horses and popular breeds associated with each type. You should use this information when selecting horses for a particular job. Decide what type of riding you are most interested in (stock, hunter, or saddle seat) and choose a horse from a breed that usually performs this type of riding well. It does not guarantee that you will have a champion horse, but it will help you select a horse that is suitable for the work you expect it to perform.



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