



Buckskin is arguably the most popular horse color these days. Two registries specialize in the high-demand color. Pictured: Who Whiz It, a buckskin stallion by Topsail Whiz, owned by the Haverty Ranch in Krum, Texas.

# The Most Marketable Color

Buckskin color provides versatility and eye appeal to all breeds and disciplines.

Article by April Fingerlos • Photographs by John Brasseaux

**T**he American Quarter Horse Association's December 2004 online poll asked Web-surfers which of the 16 AQHA-recognized horse colors was their favorite. More than 7,000 votes were tallied, and the winner by more than 150 votes over bay was buckskin.

The colors are quite similar. They feature the same dark legs, manes and tails. One little gene is responsible for the body-color difference. The fascination for the buckskin's rich, creamy body

color has grown well beyond that of its bay cousin. No other coat color has as much readily available information on the genetic makeup, thanks to research into a dilute gene that produces the buckskin color and contributes to perlinos, cremellos and duns.

The buckskin color meets the registration requirements of all stock-horse breeds. Two associations record buckskin pedigrees, opening doors to new events and breeding opportunities for buckskin lovers. And, buckskins vary

widely in appearance, from simple tan and black, to horses with the added adornment of Appaloosa spots or Paint splashes of white.

## Countless Paths

As the buckskin color is an attribute of so many breeds, owners enjoy unlimited uses for their fawn-colored horses. Two registries specialize in this high-demand color, adding competitive and breeding options. The



American Buckskin Registry Association records the pedigrees of buckskin horses and ponies, and has grown to include international representation. ABRA-registered horses are commonly co-registered with one or more foundation Quarter Horse associations and serve not only the show-ring goals of their owners, but the working-ranch side of the industry.

The International Buckskin Horse Association hosts shows and events. The association has a strong presence in the Color Breed Council, an organization that assists in training of judges and stewards for various breeds. IBHA has established alliances valuable to members participating in AQHA and National Snaffle Bit Association shows. In an effort to provide

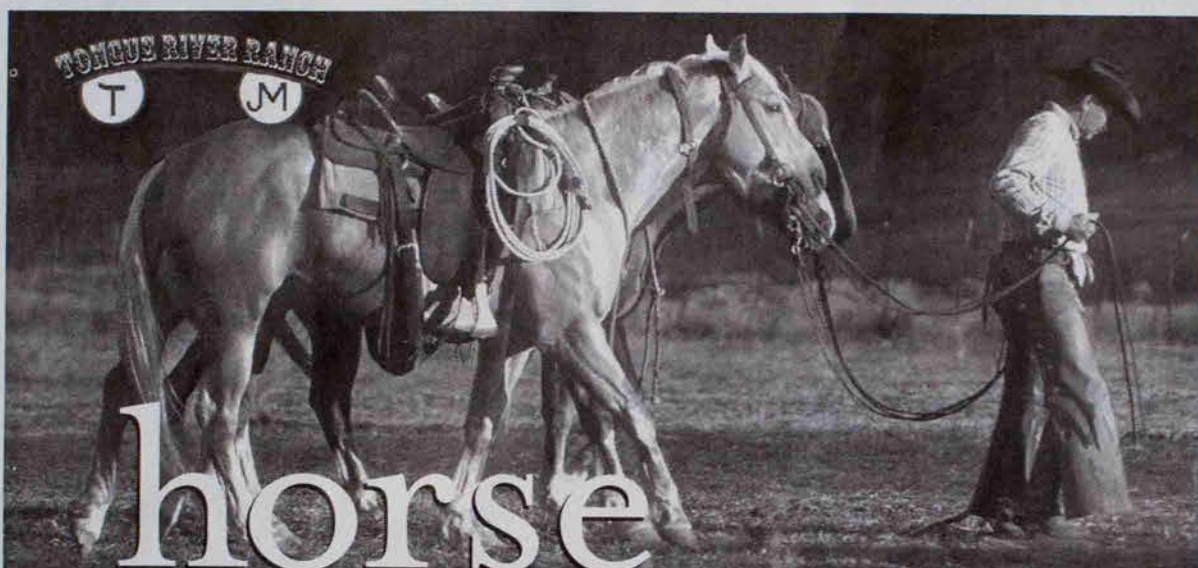
## Buckskin and Dun Sale

One of the most extensive offerings of buckskin and dun horses can be found at the 11th Annual Buckskin Extravaganza, held at noon on Aug. 6 in Dewey, Arizona.

Produced by Horsebreakers Unlimited, owned by Jon and Marywade Gilbert, the sale catalog includes more than 60 head of proven performance horses, trail and pleasure horses, and young stock, and offers one of the best selections of buckskin and dun geldings for sale.

The sale weekend begins on 1 p.m. on Friday, Aug. 5, with an open house and a performance preview, in which horses will be shown roping, reining and working cattle. Trail and pleasure horses will also be shown.

For more information, contact Horsebreakers Unlimited, Box 687, Dewey, AZ 86327; 928-632-5728, [www.horsebreakers.com](http://www.horsebreakers.com).



# horse man

## What is a horseman?

Understanding the inherent mind, spirit and ability of a horse is not just a craft. It's an art. And the Tongue River Ranch horsemen are artists.

With 89,000 acres of grass covered canvas near Guthrie, Texas - The Ranch horse capital of the world, our well-bred works of art are sculpted into the finest riding and performance horses in the country.

We believe the handle, care and training of Tongue River Ranch horses create a foundation as important as the papers that go with them. It's how we are able to produce the best built and performing horses time and time again.

*Natural Enterprise*

by Surprise Enterprise/Natural  
Live Coverage Only

*Pepcid*

by Peptoboonsmal/Brazos Lynx  
Frozen Semen Only

TONGUE RIVER RANCH  
T M

Phone: 806-596-4641 ~ Email: [patti@tongueriverranch.com](mailto:patti@tongueriverranch.com)  
HC 2 Box 20 ~ Paducah, Texas 79248

increased exposure and easy, one-stop research of dual-registered AQHA-IBHA horses, AQHA lists IBHA points and awards on the horse's AQHA record. IBHA-registered horses can earn points and prize money through NSBA competition.

Members of both organizations find ABRA and IBHA horse shows relaxing, welcoming and inviting to all skill levels of horses and riders. For competitors looking to step up from entry-level competition without the tremendous financial and time commitments required of top-level breed showing, buckskin shows can be a satisfying option. Both organizations offer events at a mid-level price and commitment point that meets the needs of most horse owners.

Both buckskin organizations host world-championship shows and provide year-end awards programs for



their members. Affiliates and charters can be found nationwide and are listed on each association's Web site.

Outside of buckskin-only shows, buckskin owners find open-show organizations that offer classes for buckskins only as part of the regular lineup. Buckskins are found in premier specialized events, such as those sanctioned by the National Reining Horse Association, National Reined Cow Horse Association and National Cutting Horse Association. In 2004, the 1999 buckskin stallion Brennas Golden Dunit, sired by NRHA's all-time leading money-earning Hollywood Dun It (himself a dun), competed successfully in the NRHA Derby with reining legend Tim McQuay, with plans for a return trip in 2005. The prized color is usually the highlight of parades and trail rides, and can be found at ropings, team pennings and gaming events of all calibers.

## Defining Color

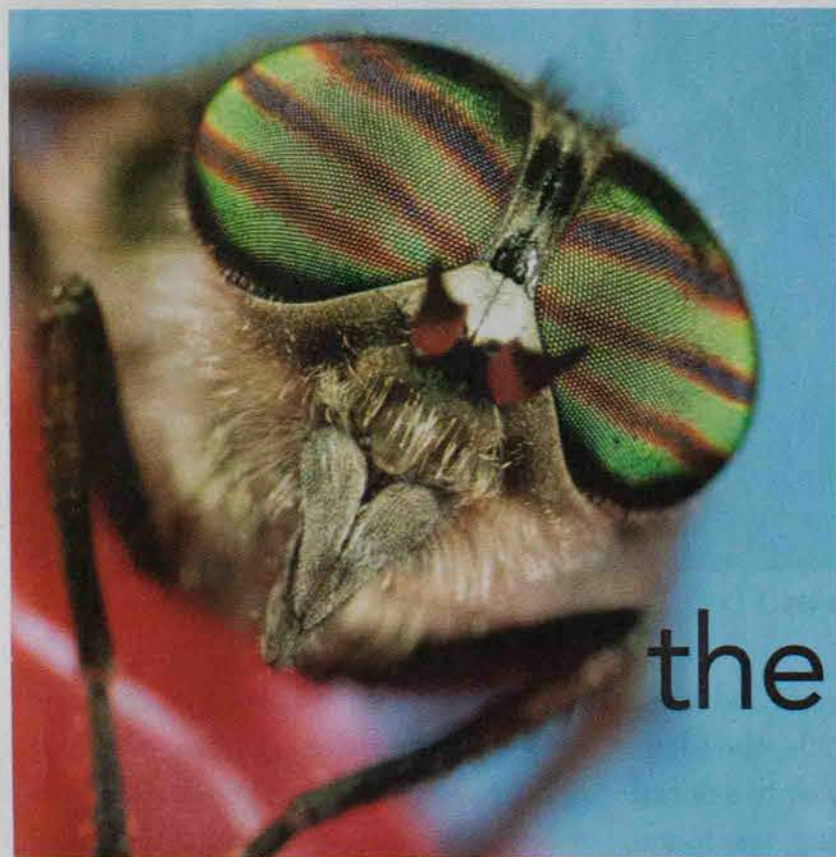
No matter what breed of horse the color happens to fall on, buckskin is solidly defined in genetics, yet can be confusing in outward appearance. Very simply, the buckskin color is produced from a single cream gene that turns the normal bay color a light, clear-toned tan, without affecting the bay's normal black points. The color holds similar, yet distinct, genetic markers to the variations of dun. A palomino also carries the cream gene, and can produce a buckskin when bred to a bay.

Until color-genetics identification becomes commonplace in equine registries, the human eye will risk being fooled by the outward difference between buckskin and dun. The clearness of color tone to the body color is a reliable clue in identifying a true buckskin. When the tone of the coat is smutty, or dirtier in appearance, the dun gene is often affecting the same bay coat.

Other outward clues of the dun gene include "primitive markings," or "dun factor." These markings include leg and shoulder barring, dorsal stripes, mottling, black-tipped ears and cob-webbing. But they aren't all seen on all duns, which provides eclectic variations of a single color.

The dorsal stripe has long been associated with the buckskin color, but has recently been declared a dun attribute. From the mid 1960s to 1987, a buckskin was said have the tell-tale stripe. At that time, the term "dun" was rarely used, as there was thought to be only one gene producing variations of the same color. As genetic research began to distinguish between cream and dun genes in the mid-1980s, AQHA responded by flip-flopping its definition of the buckskin color, stating buckskins do not have dorsal stripes, and added dun to its approved-color list.

Research progressed, and the matter



© 2005 W.F. Young, Inc.



# the Power to soothe

Always keep Absorbine® Veterinary Liniment on hand. Its remarkable formula is not only a proven topical analgesic and antiseptic that kills bacteria and fungi on contact, but a powerful itch relief for what bugs your horse. Visit [www.absorbine.com](http://www.absorbine.com) to discover all the ways Absorbine Veterinary Liniment can improve your horse's health and well-being...

**It's Horse Power in a bottle.**





INHIBITS  
MOLD & MILDEW



LEATHER<sup>®</sup>  
THERAPY

Makes Leather Behave...  
Beautifully

1-800 711 8225

www.leathertherapy.com

MANUFACTURED IN THE USA BY UNICORN EDITIONS LTD, NJ

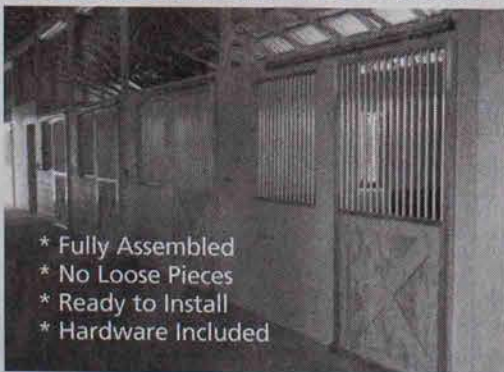
ARMOUR  
GATES

1-800-876-7706

Catalog: [www.armourgates.com](http://www.armourgates.com)

Email: [info@armourgates.com](mailto:info@armourgates.com)

ALUMINUM NO RUST



- \* Fully Assembled
- \* No Loose Pieces
- \* Ready to Install
- \* Hardware Included

Sliding Doors \* Stall Fronts \* Dutch Doors  
Gates \* Shutters \* Window Grilles  
Dividers \* End Barn Doors



\* Custom Sizes,  
Low Prices

HIGHEST QUALITY



Genetically, buckskin is very close to bay.

simultaneously became clearer and more confusing. In the late 1990s, the identification of a marking similar to a dorsal stripe, called countershading, was found in the genetic makeup of the buckskin color. Countershading mimics the dorsal stripe of duns and is found on many other colors, creating a full or partial stripe slightly darker than the horse's body color.

AQHA responded to the research findings by once again modifying the definition of buckskin in 2000, granting

that a buckskin may have what could be mistaken for a dorsal strip, without going into the detailed genetic requirements of countershading. The buckskin's color tone is still clear and even, save this one occasional feature.

## The Most Marketable Color?

In a sales market that erratically swings on buyer tastes and fancies, buckskins currently find themselves in



the enviable position of being loosely termed "the most marketable color" in generalized sales. Breeders have been seeking out the true-toned horses to capitalize on the market's available revenues, but they haven't always put the quality of horse ahead of color.

Dewey, Arizona, buckskin breeder Jon Gilbert has been promoting buckskins since 1986. His ranch, Horsebreakers Unlimited, has grown such that in 1994, he hosted his first production sale, the Buckskin Extravaganza and Production Sale, now held in late July each year. Gilbert is deeply involved in numerous other color-breed production sales. Horses from his breeding program are used on working ranches, in shows, in cow-horse and reining events, and as trail horses.

"Interest in buckskins has definitely grown in the last decade," says Gilbert. "Hollywood has had a huge impact. Everyone who saw the film *Dances With Wolves* admired that buckskin horse. Also, the marketing and offspring ability of Hollywood Dun It has boosted demand for the color.

There's a larger population of people seeking buckskin trail horses, and they might never compete. They just want to be mounted on a pretty horse. They might not know that Hollywood Dun It is really a dun, and likely don't care. They're using the old-timers' terminology that uses the terms buckskin and dun interchangeably."

Gilbert believes buckskin breeders are careful not to fall into the trap of being just color breeders. "They need to breed really nice horses first," he says. "Especially now, to get good prices, the horses have to be good. The market had a lot of mediocre horses out there five or 10 years ago that people were buying at a premium simply because of their color, hence the perception that buckskins are the most marketable color. Since then, the number of quality horses has grown, and buyers have gotten smarter. The competition at buckskin shows is so much tougher now. Breeders are producing better and better horses, and paying more attention to quality than ever."

The marketability of the buckskin

## Contacts

**American Buckskin Registry of America**, 1141 Hartnell Ave., Redding, CA 96002-2113; 530-223-1420; georgijones@aol.com, [www.americanbuckskin.org](http://www.americanbuckskin.org).

**History:** Since 1965, the ABRA has served as a nonprofit organization to preserve and record the pedigrees of buckskin and dun horses. ABRA has traced color genetics through history to the Spanish Barb, Mustang and Norwegian Dun, a descendant of the nearly-extinct Tarpan horse.

**Colors Eligible:** buckskin, dun, grulla, red dun.

**Events:** ABRA World Championship Show, late June in Tulsa, Oklahoma.

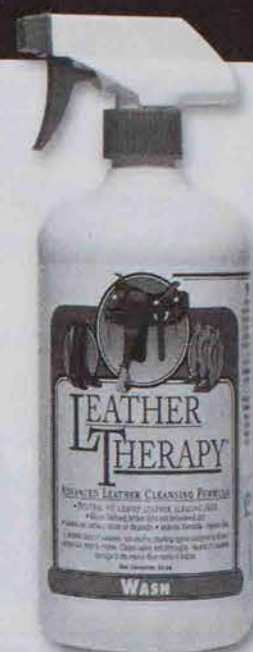
**International Buckskin Horse Association**, Box 268, Shelby, IN 46377; 219-552-1013, IBHA@netnitco.net, [www.ibha.net](http://www.ibha.net).

**History:** The recording, promotion and marketing of the buckskin horse has been the driving purpose since incorporation in 1971. The formation of strategic marketing alliances has assisted the marketability of the buckskin color.

**Colors Eligible:** buckskin, dun, grulla, red dun, brindle dun.

**Events:** IBHA World Show, early August in Columbia, Missouri; World Show Sale held at the World Show.

## REMOVES MOLD & MILDEW



## LEATHER THERAPY

Makes Leather Behave... Beautifully

1-800 711 8225

[www.leathertherapy.com](http://www.leathertherapy.com)

MANUFACTURED IN THE USA BY UNICORN EDITIONS LTD, NJ

## Turnbow Trailers, Inc.

Proudly serving the industry for 45 years



Two-horse bumper pull walk-through with dressing room.

- Perfect for larger horses • Double wall, insulated aluminum construction • Revolutionary new aluminum floor design • Available in gooseneck models • Fully loaded with many standard features • Twenty-year floor guarantee • Lifetime workmanship warranty

Ph. 800-362-5659 • 918-862-3233

• Fax: 918-862-3803

e-mail: [info@turnbowtrailers.com](mailto:info@turnbowtrailers.com)

Web site: [www.turnbowtrailers.com](http://www.turnbowtrailers.com)

PO Box 300W • Oilton, OK 74052



# Wireless!



## Electronic Timers

**Exciting new products and features for 2005!**

**Call now or visit us on the web at [farmtek.net](http://farmtek.net) to learn more!**

For **20 years**, FarmTek's products and customer service have been **proven** by thousands of satisfied customers.

Systems are available to professionally time a wide variety of events, including:

**Barrel Racing**      **Roping**  
**Team Penning**    **Bull Riding**  
**Show Jumping**    **Cutting**  
**And More!**

**CALL TOLL FREE:  
(800) 755-6529**

**FarmTek, Inc.**  
1000-D Hwy 78 North  
Wylie, TX 75098  
(972) 429-0947

**20**

Year  
Anniversary

**See us now! On the web at:  
<http://farmtek.net>**

## Genetic Alphabet Soup

In the world of equine color, a host of genes can modify the two basic horse-coat colors, chestnut (red) and black. Dilutions, modifiers and/or the addition of white give a rainbow of color possibilities.

The recipe for a buckskin horse begins with one gene of bay, a dominant black gene (E) affected by a gene that determines whether or not the horse will have black points (A). Add to this a dilution gene, which lightens the body color. For buckskin, that's the cream gene, or CCcr.

These letters, added with a few others to get the definition of a basic true buckskin exact, result in a string you won't find on registration applications: E, A, CCcr, dd, gg, ww, toto (dominant black, black points, one cream gene, no dun, grey, white or tobiano characteristics).

This same cream gene, when used in a similar recipe involving a chestnut horse instead of a bay, yields a palomino.

To get a genetically different dun color, the cream gene is substituted for the dun gene (D). The cream gene doesn't affect black pigment, but the dun gene does, lightening or fogging black points to the point that they become a different color. When the dun gene is applied to a chestnut horse rather than a bay, a red dun results, and it causes pure blacks to become grullas. Duns, therefore, are not as clear-toned in color as a buckskin, and often feature an array of different black markings, called "primitive markings" or "dun factor."

To further complicate matters, there's indeed a color genetically-defined as buckskin-dun (dunskin) or palomino-dun (dunalino). Because a foal can inherit one dilute from each parent, it's possible to get both the cream and dun gene in the same marker.

If a foal were to inherit a cream gene from both parents, the result would be a double-dilute. Double-dilute colors include cremello (chestnut base) and perlino (bay base). Double-dilutes have gained popularity due to their recent recognition as AQHA-approved colors, and because they have two copies of the dilution gene, they're guaranteed to produce a diluted color, no matter what they're bred to. This is becoming a least-risk option for breeders interested in producing buckskins and palominos.

This summary is the just tip of a mountain of known color-coat genetics data. For more in-depth information on the genetics of coat color, or to have your horse's coat color genetically verified, contact the Veterinary Genetics Laboratory, University of California-Davis, 530-752-0290, [www.vgl.ucdavis.edu](http://www.vgl.ucdavis.edu), or visit [www.equinecolor.com](http://www.equinecolor.com).

color is also driven by the multitude of opportunities open to horses with multiple registrations. Many buckskin horses are dual, if not triple-registered, opening more doors to equine participation and creating rewards for potential buyers. This opens the market tremendously, as breeders and sellers can never be sure where their product will end up.

Gilbert doesn't see any immediate

signs of a market cool-down. "With Hollywood Dun It offspring showing up at reinings and cuttings, the color is getting more and more exposure," he says. "I think the popularity will be sustained for a while. There are always people out there crazy about buckskin horses."

*April Fingerlos, a frequent contributor, lives in northern Idaho.* 🐾