

## Horse Colour

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I once met a horse owner who had her horse dream fulfilled. A palomino. Cute as a button this horse was and she (the horse) knew it. Well, that was according to her owner. That this horse had very little respect for her human was a moot point. Not only did she show bad table manners when it came to dinner, she was also reluctant to stand still when having her feet picked out (pity the hoof trimmer), wouldn't stay still while tied up and/or being saddled (great use for baling twine) and generally became a less than ideal riding horse. But she had nice colour – on the outside. It's strange how some humans prefer a 'good looking' horse to one that is well behaved and respectful. It's also weird how the human who chooses a horse for its colour and looks often has a history of owning quite a few horses. The others just didn't work out, you see.

If the truth were known (my truth), I'm a bay man. Probably because my first real horse is a bay. Gosh she's gorgeous! Well I think so. Although some say her ears are rather large and she does have a roman nose; but these, in someone else's mind, imperfections are more than offset by her demeanour, her soundness, her willingness and the ease with which she learns new things. I could add her patience, her trustiness, her stamina, her great feet, her lack of problems both physically and mentally and the fact that she just produced a perfect foal. Oh and she's a powerhouse in harness and a delight to ride too. Sounds like I am bragging here. Maybe I am. But then the other horses that live here are all, by and large, great in most of the 'important' aspects.

It wasn't always like that though. Most horses who come and live here in the herd had problems. Plus I had to learn about horses and still am learning (the more you know, the more you don't know). In the wider world, many horses are bought and sold because they have problems. Those willing and capable of 'fixing' the problems snap up a lot who are sold with problems. (Some horses are even sold with the 'problem' not even rating a mention: caveat emptor!) Once fixed, most of these horses are then sold on to other humans, some of whom resurrect the said 'problem' or manage to create new ones. And so the horse-trading goes on.

Does horse colour have anything to do with 'horse problems'? Not on the outside but the emotional (inside) colour may have.

Light temperature is the true colour of natural sunlight as it is filtered by the atmosphere or in the case of artificial light, the source and makeup of the light. Also colour film usually captures the colour temperature of light better than our own minds because our brains actually fool us into 'colour correcting' when the light seems weird. However at late sunset or early sunrise, the warmth of the colour temperature is too strong for our brains to compensate or correct. And did you know that the light from a normal fluorescent tube is bluey green? But our

brains can correct this too and make the colours under such light seem normal. Well sort of normal.

Light temperature is universally measured in degrees Kelvin (K<sup>0</sup>). This probably came about because of a horse named Kelvin who clearly displayed the full spectrum of colour in his moods and emotions.

To have the worldwide scientific explanation of the colour temperature of light named after Kelvin made his owner very proud. Although it has been suggested that Kelvin's horse person was partly responsible for Kelvin's amazing range of moods and emotions. Kelvin's horse person vehemently denies this assertion and blames all of Kelvin's wild and wacky behaviour on the way he was handled by humans in his life before they teamed up. It's not about the human! Or have I got that wrong here?

So what is emotional colour and what is the range of colours available in the horse emotional spectrum? I would suggest that just about every colour, hue and intensity could be attached to horses moods and emotions.

Try this: If moods and emotions are represented by colours, what colour would your horse be when he is grazing in a paddock? Maybe green, blue, mauve, purple, even sky blue. Nice and calm and at peace. Similarly, what colour would he be when he refuses to do something? Before answering that, we must first determine why he has given a refusal. Could be he is scared, lazy, unmotivated, in pain, hungry, full or any number of other reasons. So his emotional colour depends on his state of mind and what is making him act/react the way he is.

A horse can have an emotional attack or mood expressed with tense muscles and, often, a BIG snort! His emotional colour? Red, bright orange, bright yellow? Alert/Danger/Oh Shit! If you are on his back, how are you going to react when he has this kind of reaction? Tense your muscles and take a big breath? What colour is your mood or emotion if that happens to you?

One aspect of horse ownership that really fascinates me is 'colour coordination'. My riding pal has made a point of collecting and applying to her horse a brown halter, brown lead rope/reins, brown treeless saddle and she made herself a pair of nifty leggings (brown of course). Which all looks pretty smart. (I really don't think she is serious about the 'outside colour' thing, but then you never know). Though her pet hate is, matching rug/neck rug combo's in padded synthetic. Colour coordinated and as uncomfortable as hell for the horse. But the horse 'looks good' to its owner. My concession to rugging is that the rug has to be dirty, patched, breathable and only used when absolutely needed. About three days a year at most! My choice, after consulting with the horse, of course.

The most spectacular colour clashes though are those between rider and horse and the colour being emotional colour, the one on the inside, not the outside. Oh boy, when this happens, does the brown stuff hit the fast spinning blades of the fan, big time. And the combinations are endless in number and effect. The horse gets scared - the rider gets scared. The horse gets scared - the owner gets angry. The owner gets frustrated - the horse panics. The human gets angry and the horse wants to run away. The horse is relaxed and the owner wants to win. The horse is sore and the rider is inconsiderate or unaware. The horse is unfit and the rider is too lazy (or more unfit than the horse) to get off and walk. The horse doesn't want to load up into the float (because of the rough trip to the event) so all the predators gather around and try to scare/push/force it back into the float. And you could probably add many more such emotional colour clashes between human and horse.

The outcome of a lot of these 'clashes' are problem horses or horses with problems. It could be argued that in a lot of cases the horse's problem was in fact the human. Though very few humans with horse problems can see this. And don't tell them either. Stick around and acquire some very nice (cheap) horses, take them home, treat them with kindness, firmness, fairness, understanding and respect for being a horse, ask for their forgiveness for the way they were treated by the other human and more often than not you have a friend for life. If you decide to part company, just be selective though, to whom you sell the horse, if that is his/her destiny.

To overcome most of these 'colour clashes' the human can do plenty. Like a great artist you can develop feel, sensitivity, appreciation, technique and creativity for good colour e-motion (energy in motion) in both you and your horse. Learn what needs to be done and what needs to be changed in both yourself and your horse to achieve positive change and emotional colour harmony. And do it! It'll make a rainbow look pale!

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