



A LIGHTER

The sabino coat pattern,

SHADE OF

sometimes misidentified and often underappreciated,

RED

has much to offer the serious Paint breeder

By Frank Holmes

Ropers Reflection (facing page) is a seventh-generation sabino, bred and owned by Sandy Messler of Elbert, Colorado. The 1994 red roan sabino stallion is by Heath Bar None and out of Ropes Impresor by Impresor AQHA.

When it comes to describing Paint spotting patterns, the term sabino (sah-BEE-no) seems to be one of the most confusing and least-understood.

In his book, *Western Words—A Dictionary of the American West*, Ramon F. Adams lists sabino as being Spanish for “a horse with a light-red, almost pink, roan-colored body and a pure-white belly.”

This accurately describes one of the many variants of the pattern—the one at the median of the spectrum.

But what about the opposite ends of the palette?

Minimally-expressed, the sabino pattern manifests itself in the form of white markings on the head and legs on an otherwise solid-colored horse.

These sabinos are often confused with solid horses that have usual white markings. The sabinos are different in that their white markings tend to have narrow, pointed extensions up the legs or down the throat. A classic example of this type of sabino is the well-known Hank Wiescamp-bred stallion, St Sheila.

Minimally-marked red roan sabinos are often confused with classic roan horses, with the only difference being the sabino's extended leg and face markings.

As the sabino pattern progresses, the white markings on the legs get higher, extending up the forearm and chest in the front, and the stifle in the rear. Belly spots appear that are often visible from the side.

On the head, the white markings become more extensive, spreading outward over the eyes, and up

from the lower lip to the throat-latch. In some instances, the head is completely white, or apron- or bonnet-faced.

Two early-day Paint show champions—Nylon and her maternal half-brother Jacket Bar's—are classic examples of this phase of the pattern.

As the sabino pattern progresses even farther, it becomes more flecked or speckled over the entire body. The belly and the head are often completely white.

This phase of the pattern is probably the one most readily identifiable as sabino. Scenic Frosted Jet is an excellent example of this type of sabino.

At this point, however, the pattern again becomes somewhat ambiguous.

Sabinos with sharply-edged, large spots on their sides are sometimes confused with frame overos.

Because, as the pattern progresses the white in it extends vertically over the back, some sabinos are confused with tobianos.

Finally, in its maximally-expressed form, the sabino pattern evolves into an extremely white horse.

Although most horses of this pattern are born as medicine hats, with dark pigment on their ears and/or foreheads, often times the pigment fades to the point of becoming virtually undetectable. The well-known sire Scenic Jetalito is a classic example of the predominantly-white sabino.

White sabinos are sometimes erroneously classified as lethal whites. Nothing could be farther from the truth.

Along with being misidentified, the case can be made that the sabino pattern is also grossly underappreciated.

It is a pattern that is much more prevalent than commonly perceived, and one that Paint breeders have been manipulating for years with far-reaching results.

To more readily understand it—from both the identification and genetic standpoints—let us first take a look at some influential



Nylon, a 1961 red roan sabino mare by Roan Bar AQHA and out of Bar's Cherry AQHA, was one of the breed's first show ring superstars. She also founded an enduring line of sabino Paints.

sabino families, and then dissect one of those families genetically.

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One smooth sabino

Nylon #360, one of the first red roan sabino Paints to be registered by the APHA, was also one of the breed's first great show horses. (See "Smooth As Silk," February 1996, *Paint Horse Journal*.)

Foaled in 1961, and bred by Riley Miller of Fluvanna, Texas, Nylon was sired by Roan Bar AQHA and out of Bar's Cherry AQHA.

Roan Bar, as his name implies, was a classic red roan, with a darker head and legs. Bar's Cherry was a solid sorrel with a bald face and three high stockings.

As far as where Nylon's sabino heritage might have come from, one need look no farther than her maternal granddam.

Also owned by the Miller family, she was known as Cherry, and was an unregistered daughter of the foundation Quarter Horse sire Chubby.

A recently discovered photograph of her, circa late-1940s, shows Cherry to be colored identically to Nylon.

With such potent sabino genes, it stands to reason that Cherry's daughter, Bar's Cherry, and her granddaughter, Nylon, would have the potential to produce Paint color.

Which they did.

According to APHA records, Bar's Cherry was the dam of four cropout Paints. In addition to Nylon, she was the dam of one other red roan sabino—the National Champion halter and performance stallion, Jacket Bar's.

Nylon was the dam of 10 foals. Of these, seven were colored and four were red roan sabinos.

The most influential of Nylon's produce, in terms of a genetic legacy, was C Note's Sawbuck. Bred by Jim Smoot of Gainesville, Texas, and foaled in 1969, "Sawbuck" was sired by the calico overo C-Note.

Pattern-wise, C Note's Sawbuck was a predominantly-white, medicine hat sabino.

Bred to an equal mix of Quarter Horse and Paint mares, he sired 112 registered foals. Of these, 95, or 85 percent were colored.



JIM BORTVEDT

QUINCE TREE

Among Sawbuck's sabino Paint get was a mare named C Note's See Saw. Foaled in 1974, and colored exactly like Nylon, "See Saw" was out of a Breeding Stock Paint mare named Baldy Wine.

See Saw was the dam of five foals, of which four were colored and two were red roan sabinos. Among the latter two was Scenic Jetalito, a 1981 stallion by Jetalito.

Like his maternal grandsire, C Note's Sawbuck, Scenic Jetalito was a predominantly-white medicine hat sabino. As he matured, the dark pigment on his ears and forehead became barely visible.

Owned for most of his life by the Johanninger family of Monona, Iowa, Scenic Jetalito was the sire of 253 registered foals. Bred to Quarter Horse mares

two-thirds of the time, he sired 84 percent color.

Among Scenic Jetalito's get is Scenic Jets Joak, a 1986 dun sabino out of Scenic Miss Joak AQHA.

Owned by Terry Sakal of Swan River, Manitoba, Canada, "Joak" is a carbon-copy, color-wise, of his sire. Bred to solid-colored mares 75 percent of the time, the predominantly-white sabino has sired 141 registered foals to date. Of these, 108, or 77 percent, are colored.

Several other Scenic Jetalito sons have impressive color-getting records as well.

Scenic Frosted Jet, a 1984 red roan sabino stallion out of Miss Dew Mark, is owned by Maggie Johnston of Fierson, Louisiana. Bred to mostly solid-colored mares, he is the sire of 75 percent color to date.

Four of Nylon's descendants serve as examples of the progressive degrees of white expression within the sabino pattern. They are (clockwise from bottom right): Fan C Nicole, a 1987 mare by C Note's Sawbuck and out of Modern Michelle AQHA; The Time-nator, a 1993 stallion by Scenic Jets Joak and out of I Have Time AQHA; Scenic Frosted Jet, a 1984 stallion by Scenic Jetalito and out of Miss Dew Mark; and Scenic Jetalito.

Scenic Blondys Jet, a 1985 predominantly-white sabino stallion out of Miss Skipper Dude AQHA, is owned by Garner and Lynn Gray of Pringle, South Dakota. He, too, maintains a three-to-one color ratio out of solid-colored mares.

From the production records of the above horses, it would appear that the sabino pattern, especially



DON TROUT



FRANK HOLMES



DON SHUGART



DON SHUGART

Puchilingui (top) and his double-registered daughter Artic Color (middle) are red roan sabino Thoroughbreds. Artic Color's APHA registration photos, taken when she was a weanling, show her to be a medicine hat Paint with dark roan spots on her ears, forehead, neck, back, loin and croup.

As a red roan sabino tovero, Specks Unreal Luck (bottom left) presents an interesting study in Paint genetics. A potent sire of color, he also sires a high percentage of red roan sabinos such as Speck And A Half (bottom right).

the predominantly-white one, has much to offer the breed from a genetic standpoint.

As potent as the pattern appears, however, the predominantly-white, or medicine hat, sabino remains somewhat difficult to identify, let alone appreciate.

To illustrate the difficulty, consider the cases of Scenic Crystal Jet, Hawkeye Sure Jet and VF Snowbird.

All three horses are sired by Scenic Jetalito. All three are out of Quarter Horse mares, and all three are registered with APHA as solid white Breeding Stock horses.

Scenic Crystal Jet, a 1984 white mare, is owned by Rebecca Rockow of Webster City, Iowa. The mare is the dam of seven registered foals, all overos, with five of them sired by Quarter Horses.

Hawkeye Sure Jet, a 1984 white stallion, is owned by Leo O'Rourke of Monticello, Iowa. The stallion is the sire of 16 registered foals, 11 of them overos, including five out of Quarter Horse mares.

VF Snowbird, a 1985 white mare, is owned by Inge Hartley of Madison, Georgia. She is the dam of three foals, all overos, including one by a Quarter Horse.

Registration papers to the contrary, it would appear that Scenic Crystal Jet, Hawkeye Sure Jet and VF Snowbird are all very potent, predominately-white sabinos.

The Nylon line of sabinos—from C Note's Sawbuck to The Timenator—is an extensive one, and far too long to be completely covered here.

Suffice it to say that it is one of the more potent lines in the history of the breed—from both a historical and genetic standpoint.

Red roan royalty

Although rare, several unrelated families of sabino Thoroughbred have been documented.

Of these, one of the best-known is that originating with Puchilingui. (See "Royalty With a Twist," August 1996, *Paint Horse Journal*.)

Foaled in 1984, and owned by Gerald and Nancy Tyler of Cadillac, Michigan, Puchilingui is

a grandson of Raise A Native and Needles.

His APHA production record shows the colorful stallion to be the sire of seven cropout Paints.

The Jockey Club, which regulates the registration of all American Thoroughbreds, operates on the set-in-stone registration philosophy that “number-to-number gets a number.” In other words, all of Puchilingui’s Thoroughbred get, even the cropout sabinos, are eligible for registration with the Jockey Club.

Due to this fact, the actual number of his get that are sabinos, and registered with the Jockey Club but not the APHA, is no doubt much greater than seven.

While not as old or large a family of sabinos as the one descending from Nylon, the Puchilingui line is every bit as colorful and intriguing.

Given the fact that the Thoroughbred has been selectively bred for centuries to be a basically solid-colored animal, the fact that a horse like Puchilingui can even exist speaks volumes to the genetic power of the sabino gene.

Carrying that thought one step farther, Puchilingui has proven his ability to sire sabino Paints of every conceivable pattern, from a variety of solid Thoroughbred and Quarter Horse mares.

On one end of Puchilingui’s Paint production record, there are minimally-marked sabinos, such as Puchi Trap.

Foaled in 1995, and owned by Debi Crady of Salt Lick, Kentucky, Puchi Trap is out of a bay Thoroughbred mare named She’s A Trap. Also a bay, Puchi Trap has excess white on all four legs and her head. She also has several small belly spots.

In the middle, pattern-wise, among Puchilingui’s get is the 1995 red roan sabino, Jazzabelle Rae.

Owned by Linda Ryan of Bardstown, Kentucky, Jazzabelle Rae is out of a sorrel Quarter Horse mare named Cybill Rae. Color-wise, “Jazzabelle” is a carbon-copy of her sire.

Finally, at the opposite, or extreme white, end of Puchilingui’s

cropout sabino get, there is the mare Poohlingui.

Foaled in 1992, and owned by Gerald and Nancy Tyler, Poohlingui is out of the palomino Quarter Horse mare Tardys Peach.

Color-wise, she is pure white. White, as in no dark pigment anywhere that can be discerned from weanling registration photos.

Registered as a Breeding Stock, Poohlingui has had one foal to date. Born in 1996, and sired by Doc Jensen, a chestnut Quarter Horse son of Doc Bar, that foal is a palomino overo.

Doc Jensen has sired no other registered cropout Paints, so it appears probable that Poohlingui is not a solid white horse, but a predominantly white sabino instead.

A doubly-potent Paint

There are numerous other interesting families of sabinos, such as the one founded by Specks Unreal Luck.

A two-time National Champion Working Cow Horse, “Speck” is owned by Jerry and Sue Studnicka of Central City, Nebraska. Foaled in 1984, he is sired by Unreal, a cropout sabino, and out of Specks Half N Half, a tobiano.

As a sabino tovero, Speck’s production record is impressive. Bred mostly to solid mares, he has sired 104 registered foals. Of these, 96, or 91 percent, are colored.

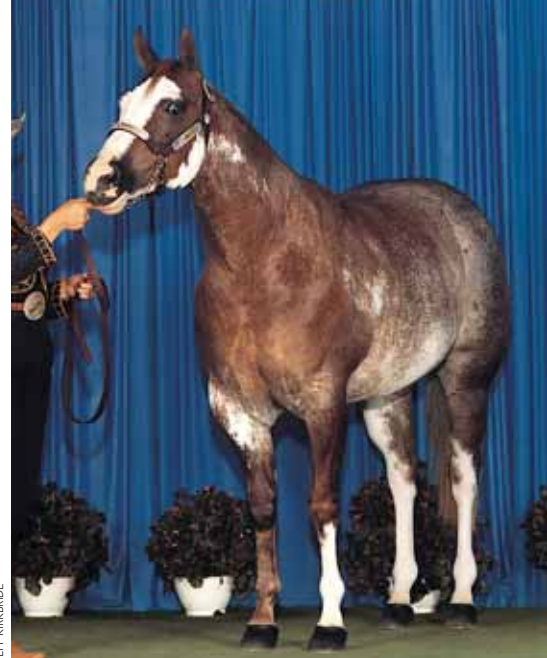
Drawing from his tovero heritage, Speck has sired 37 overos, 47 tobianos and 12 toveros. His sabino genetics have kicked in to enable him to sire 41 red roans.

With this kind of genetic variety, surely Specks Unreal Luck represents one of the most intriguing potential genetic studies available.

As do other sabino families.

Same song, different verse

Thirteenth Verse, a 1988 red roan sabino mare, is owned by John and Diane Coghlin of Mattawan, Michigan. A Superior Amateur and Open Halter Horse, Thirteenth Verse was sired by Versa Star and is out of Spice Is Nice.



JEFF KIRKBRIDE



K. C. MONTGOMERY

Thirteenth Verse (top) is a 1988 red roan sabino mare owned by John and Diane Coghlin of Mattawan, Michigan. Bred to Sonmys Securitee AQHA, she produced the 1996 sorrel calico overo stallion Securitee Exchange (bottom).

To date, Thirteenth Verse has produced five foals for the Coghlin. Of these, four are colored, including two that were sired by Quarter Horses.

All four of Thirteenth Verse’s colored foals exhibit both the leg and face markings generally associated with the sabino pattern, and the sharper-edged side and neck spots often seen on calico overos.

Does this point to the possibility that the sabino pattern can be likened to a path that branches off in one direction to produce the

speckled roan pattern, and forks off in another to produce the more sharply-defined calico pattern?

Only more research will tell.

More roans

In addition to the Nylon family of Paints, there is another line of sabinos that originates with a particularly-potent female. It is the Baby Doll McCue line.

Foaled in 1962, and sired by Cotton McCue AQHA and out of Roan Moore AQHA, "Baby Doll" was purchased as a weanling by Sandy Messler of Elbert, Colorado.

Owned for her entire life by Messler, Baby Doll McCue was the dam of nine foals, all colored. Skippa Rope, her most famous offspring, was sired by Skip Hi, and foaled in 1968.

An early-day APHA Champion, and, like Specks Unreal Luck, a sabino tovero, Skippa Rope was a 96 percent sire of color.

In 1972, Messler bred Skippa Rope to a bay Quarter Horse mare named Spicey Sullivan. From this mating came the bay sabino stallion Roper's Sullivan.

Like his sire, Roper's Sullivan was a potent sire of color. Among his get is the well-known show horse and sire, Sullivans Heathen. Foaled in 1980, out of the cropout overo mare Rita's Sister, this red roan sabino stallion also proved to be a dominant color sire.

Sullivans Heathen, in turn, is the sire of several sabino sons that are doing their part to uphold the family's color-getting legacy.

Among them is Heath Bar None, a predominantly-white sabino stallion owned by Wayne and Nancy Schomaker of Fountain, Colorado.

To provide a more-detailed view on the genetic makeup of the sabino, Dr. Phillip Sponenberg, Professor of Pathology and Genetics at the Virginia-Maryland Regional College of Veterinary Medicine was asked to study the production records of several contemporary sabino stallions, including Heath Bar None.

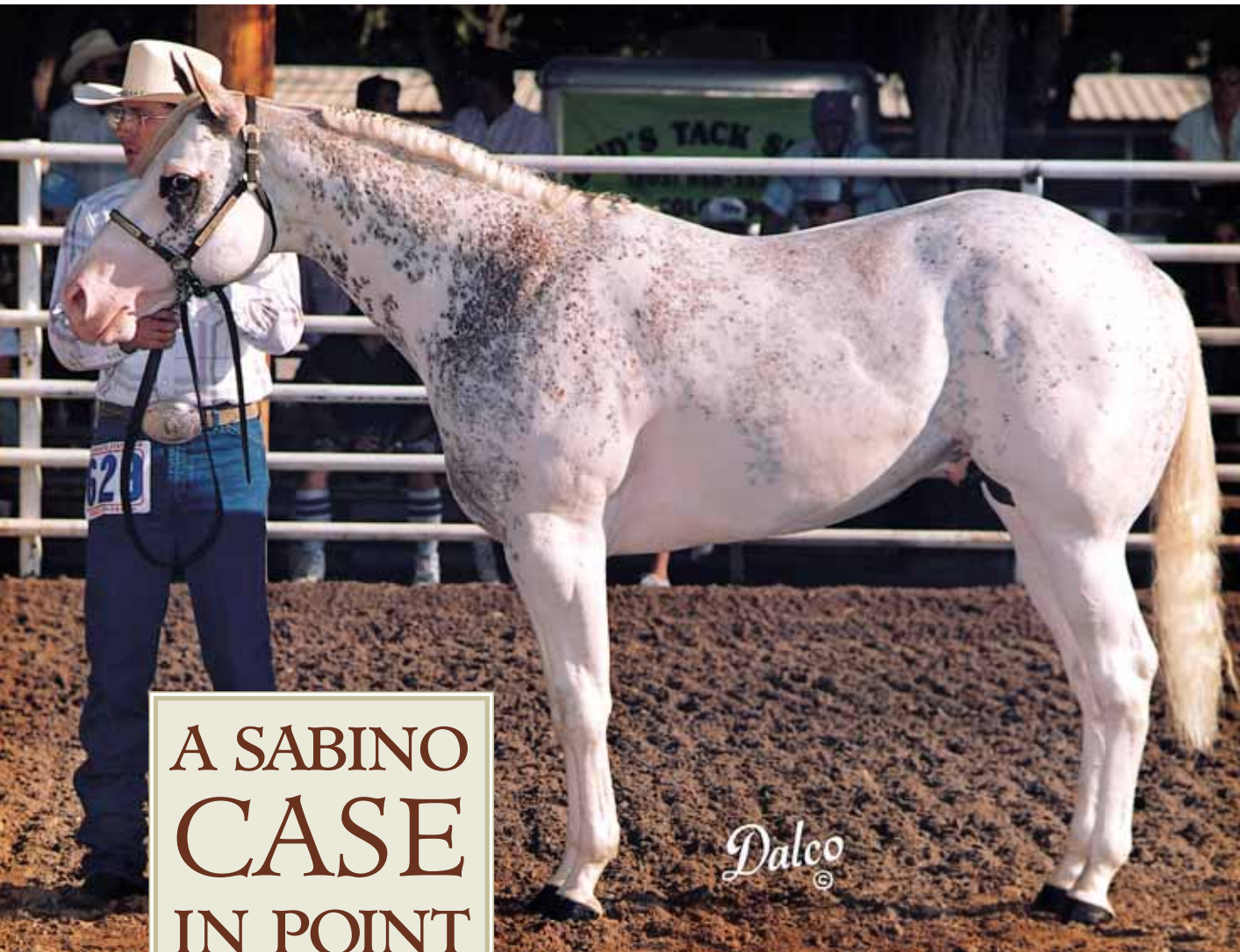
Dr. Sponenberg's observations are as follows:



Top: The red roan sabino mare Baby Doll McCue was a 100 percent color producer. Bred to Skip Hi #8, a tobiano, she produced Skippa Rope, a red roan tovero.

Middle: Skippa Rope sired 139 registered foals, of which 134 were colored. His 1973 bay sabino son, Roper's Sullivan, shown here with Sandy Messler, was out of Spicey Sullivan, a bay Quarter Horse mare.

Bottom: Sullivans Heathen, a 1980 red roan sabino stallion by Roper's Sullivan and out of Rita's Sister, was an Open APHA Champion with 90 halter and 327 performance points. He sired 134 registered foals, of which 112 were colored.



A SABINO CASE IN POINT

By D. Phillip Sponenberg,
DVM, PhD

Let me begin by stating that the sabino pattern is interesting for several reasons, not the least of which is the subtle and fascinating array of variants that the pattern can take.

Sabinos range from quite solid, to very roaned or speckled, to very patched, and everything in between.

Nearly all sabinos have white legs, a great deal of white on the head and white areas on the belly.

These characteristics help separate the sabinos from the more familiar tobianos and frame overos.

The sabino pattern seems to be quite different from the other Paint patterns—tobiano and frame—in the manner in which it is inherited.

Tobiano and frame overo are both caused by single genes. Horses either have the gene and are spotted, or don't have the gene and therefore lack the pattern.

With these two patterns there are two fundamental questions for each horse. Question one is, "Is the pattern present or not?" Question two is, "If present, how extensive is the pattern?"

These two questions sort all horses into various groups and are important for understanding how the pattern is transmitted from generation to generation.

Some foals get the gene, and the pattern, and can then either express a great deal of white or relatively little white.

Other foals fail to get the gene, as well as the pattern, from the parent, and therefore make the question of "how much white?" meaningless.

The only exception to the passage of these genes is the homozygous tobiano horse, which transmits the tobiano gene to all its offspring.

The "either/or" question seems not to pertain to the sabino pattern. The only question with it seems to be "how much?" Stated another way, it appears to be simply an extension of the usual white leg and face marks on horses.

At one end of the sabino pattern are the basically solid-colored horses, with the white markings just beginning to creep up the legs

Heath Bar None, a 1980 red roan sabino stallion, is sired by Sullivans Heathen and out of Wiggy Babe AQHA by Wiggy Bar. An APHA Champion and the earner of 90 halter and 20 performance points, Heath Bar None is a 90 percent sire of color for owners Wayne and Nancy Schomaker of Fountain, Colorado.

and jaw. At the other end are the predominantly-white horses.

In my book, *Equine Color Genetics*, published in 1996 by Iowa State University Press, I stated that the sabino allele (SB²) behaves in many cases as though it, too, is a single gene.

The sabino production records that have recently been made available to me now strongly suggest that the pattern is polygenic.

This means that it comes about as the result of the action of several different genes, each of which make a small contribution to the overall pattern.

Minimally-white sabinos simply have fewer of these genes than do maximally-white sabinos.

The production records of sabinos strongly supports this theory. Whiter sabinos are more dominant producers of color than the more solid-colored ones.

An important observation to make at this point has to do with the apparent difference between maximally-white sabinos and lethal whites. There seems to be strong evidence to support the generally-subscribed-to theory that sabinos by themselves, no matter how white they are, produce few, if any, lethal white foals.

The progeny of very pale sabinos, such as Puchilingui and Heath Bar None, run the whole range from mostly-solid horses with one or two low socks and maybe a small star, to very white medicine hats.

Most of their get, however, tend to be more toward the spotted end of the range, with the highly-desirable body spots, splashes and roan areas typical of the pattern.

Bred to 34 Quarter Horse mares, Heath Bar None sired 30 obvious sabinos. This is an 88 percent color ratio and can be explained only by several genes working rather than a single one.

A single gene would have resulted in the familiar 50:50 ratio, or maybe 75:25 in the case of a tovero.

White on the legs tends to go along with relatively high expression of the sabino pattern.



MARGE SCHWARTZ



DARELL DODDS

Top: *Heaths Snowflake*, a 1983 red roan sabino mare owned by Doug and Julie Rans of Spearfish, South Dakota, is by Heath Bar None and out of Oiles Snowcone. Her 1998 sabino foal is by Superior Halter Horse Star Street.

Bottom: *Scarlet Ember*, a 1994 sorrel sabino mare owned by Sandy Messler, is sired by Heath Bar None and out of Scarlet Ember AQHA.

In the case of Heath Bar None, his 34 foals out of the Quarter Horse mares had only four dark legs out of a possible 136.

This is remarkable, and the suggestion here is that mating sabinos to Quarter Horse mares with a great deal of white on their legs will probably contribute to an even higher percentage of spotted foals.

Clydesdale breeders have been learning to manipulate the sabino pattern for years.

They prefer the lower and middle range of expression, so they usually mate horses with four white feet to those with at least one dark foot.

That way they are reasonably assured of lots of white on the legs, maybe some patches and roan on the body, but not much more white than that.

They do not prefer the medicine hat extreme of the pattern, because those horses are harder to keep clean under harness.

Although the 1998 Heath Bar None colt Silver Elite (left) and his unnamed half-sister (right) are at opposite ends of the sabino pattern spectrum, both have much to offer the Paint breed from a genetic standpoint.



DARRELL DODDS

The take-home message on the sabino pattern is that it can be manipulated just like mixing paint!

Foals produced from darker sabinos are likely to slip by undetected until mated just right. This is where many of the Quarter Horse and Thoroughbred cropouts come from.

Horses from the medium range of sabino expression are likely to produce the entire range of sabinos, and very white sabinos will lighten and brighten up the foals from virtually every color of mare.

In closing, I wish to make several extremely critical points.

First of all, as I stated in my book, the sabino pattern is confusing and has been poorly stud-

ied. I, in no way, intend for my preliminary study of Heath Bar None's production record to be misconstrued as an end-all assessment of the sabino pattern.

On the opposite side of the coin, the sabino pattern is one of the most interesting and potentially valuable patterns in existence.

There are a number of prominent Paint breeders who have been practicing the very theories regarding the pattern that I have placed on the table in this short dissertation.

These breeders have, for years, held to the theory that "cropout to cropout" will consistently produce the highest instances of overo

color. In the majority of their programs, the cropouts that these individuals are using are minimally-marked sabinos.

In many ways, when breeding for overo Paint color, controlling the amount of excess white on the horse is every bit as critical as getting the white in the first place.

The sabino pattern, with all its variants, and obvious propensity to throw back to the patterns of previous generations, offers one of the most exciting and potentially rewarding tools to ever be placed at the disposal of the serious Paint breeder.

It is a pattern that should, and hopefully will be, studied much more intensely in the future.