

## ***An Untapped Market: The Gaited Appaloos by Cheryl Palmer***

The purpose of this article is to raise an awareness and appreciation of the gait that a few of the Appaloosa horses have. It is called the Indian Shuffle, and it is another dimension of the Appaloosa's versatility that mostly goes unrecognized.

### ***SOMETHING FOR EVERYBODY***

Versatility is the strength of the Appaloosa breed. The Appaloosa Horse Club has stock horse types, sport, endurance, recreational, trail, reining, roping, ranch work, parades, show, and gaited. All of these sports of endeavor are here in one package. Dr. Deb Bennett, paleontologist and horse researcher, said, "Absolute uniformity of type within any breed is not desirable because horses have various uses."

### ***SOME HISTORY- The trail of the gaited ApHC Appaloosa***

In order to understand the gaitedness in some of our Appaloosas one needs to know the early history and development of the Appaloosa Horse Club (ApHC). Early North America was a melting pot of people and horses. All of our American made breeds have a common ancestry and therefore share bloodlines from one another. Morgan's, Saddlebred's, Appaloosa's, Quarter Horses, and other breeds all share a common gaited ancestry. They are a conglomeration of different bloodlines as there were no breeds in the beginning of colonial times. Early horses of North America trace back to Europe and their blood mingled and mixed in varying degrees with the Spanish Colonial horse, Canadian Pacer, and Narragansett pacer blood.

It was the norm during colonial times to ride gaited horses as they were smooth, comfortable and possessed fast ground covering gaits. The gaited horse was the preferred mount in Europe and in Colonial America. Gaited horses were also called Saddle horses, amblers travelers, shufflers, or pacers.

Did you know that after the Nez Perce War in 1877, the Appaloosa horse of the Nez Perce Indians was scattered hither and yon. The

few that remained in pockets were bred randomly to other types of horses. By this time there were no “pure” Appaloosas and DNA markers prove that. A handful of men gathered up some strays and started the Appaloosa Club in 1938. Sixty one years had elapsed from the end of the Nez Perce War to the starting of the Club. Most people do not know that the ApHC in it’s early days from 1938 through the 1970’s was opened up to out crossing to many other recognized registered breeds including many gaited breeds in order to build up the numbers of this new fledgling breed. The Appaloosas that were left had only their pattern coats to identify them as Appaloosas. Appaloosas that showed Paint or Pinto characteristics were barred from registration.

At the inception of the ApHC in the 1970 you could outcross your Appaloosa to the following 7 breeds:

- Morgan’s(AMHA), some gaited genes
- Saddlebreds (ASBA, gaited genes
- Standardbreds, a gaited breed
- Tennessee Walkers (TWH), gaited genes
- Arabians, some gaited
- Thoroughbreds
- Quarter Horses (AQHA), a few gaited

The breeding rules changed in the 1970’s and out crossing was restricted from that time forward to just the Quarter Horse, Arabian, and Thoroughbred and that’s how it is today.

### ***LUXURY RIDE–THE GAITED APPALOOSA***

The phrase “Indian Shuffle” was coined by early promoters of the breed in 1940. There are a very few Appaloosas that have this gaited trait but it is most definitely a part of the history and heritage of the Appaloosa breed. This is an untapped market that needs more recognition and value. Today the riding public is comprised in large part of Baby Boomers who want smooth moving trail riding horses. Trail riding is the number one past time of many horse owners and is the trend in the equine market. Comfort and style are fast becoming very popular in all gaited breeds. But you don’t have to be older to

enjoy a gaited Appaloosa, just smart. The pictures of the Appaloosas in this article and on the referenced video show how much fun riding a gaited Appaloosa can be.

### ***WHAT GAIT IS***

A gaited horse has been blessed with extra gaits or gears that a non-gaited horse cannot perform. Non-gaited horses walk, trot, and canter/lope and are limited to these ranges of gaits. In a gaited horse however, they can trot as well as do one or more of the extra gaits. Where the trot is a 2 beat gait, the intermediate gaits are 4 beat gaits. In the 2 beat trot the diagonal pair of legs are in perfect unison as the horse's legs leave the ground and come back to the ground transmitting an impact which jostles the rider and produces a bounce to horse and rider. In the 4 beat gaits there are always one or more legs on the ground. Therefore there is no suspension and no bouncing around in the saddle.

Beverly Whittington, in her article "Gait", asks "

Why is the gait comfortable? The human body will adjust to the movement of a gaited horse much more readily than the movement of the trot. Most gaits are a derivative of the natural equine walk and the motion perceived by the rider causes the human pelvis to move in the same way it does when we walk. As the human being lifts each foot off the ground and swings it forward there is a corresponding lift and forward shift of the pelvis on the same side. The motion felt from the saddle when riding a horse in gait is the same, a slight lift and forward arc. The trot has a moment of suspension then impact, which has no natural equivalent in the human being. It is also rather hard on the joints and soft tissues of the human body."

The Indian Shuffle in our gaited Appaloosas is just a catch all phrase meaning a gaited horse. All gaited breeds do the same gaits depending upon how the horse is built relative to their conformation. They are all 4 beat gaits on a spectrum from diagonal to lateral, which includes the Foxtrot gait, stepping pace, rack, running walk, flat-footed walk, and single foot.

## ***THE BREAK THROUGH IN ANIMAL GENETICS***

DNA has revolutionized our immediate ability to know whether a horse is gaited or not. For \$95 at Animal Genetics you can send in a hair sample to determine whether your horse is gaited or not.

NEEMEPOOS REDNECK , a ApHC few spot stallion, was tested at the Animal Genetics Lab and found to be homozygous gaited. This means he carries two gaited genes and all of his foals will therefore be gaited. He is considered an AA horse which is the most gaited a horse can be! A single gene gaited horse, CA gaited, can gait and trot, but will only be able to pass that trait on 50% of the time, whereas an AA gaited gene horse bred to any breed (gaited or not) will produce 100% gait. Redneck is a hard wired, strong homozygous gaited stallion who has produced between 20 and 30 gaited offspring to date.

## ***CONCLUSION***

Now there is no reason for Appaloosa buyers to go outside the breed for a gaited horse.

The gait should be considered as one more aspect of the versatility of the Appaloosa. The gait is a trait that comes from the roots of the Appaloosa breed and is in it's history. We are once again celebrating and valuing the gaited treasure that got lost in the shuffle.



Nemeeppoo Redneck #640035, APHC registered Foundation Appaloo  
the National Pleasure all gaited show in Missouri and winning ribbons