

WHAT DO YOU MEAN I NEED BETTER PICTURES?!?

by Sharon January

Finally, you have everything sent in to register your horse--the proper paperwork with all the blanks filled in, the money, and of course those dreaded pictures! You're waiting for the registration certificate to come back to come back but instead you get a letter requesting better pictures.

"WHAT?!? I sent in all the *\$@\$!&#\$!! required pictures!" you say. "So what if a few legs were cut off...what's the big deal? They're just harassing me. What do they want? For me to get a professional photographer or something?"

No, you don't need to get a professional photographer, and no, no one is harassing you. Few people stop to consider how important good pictures can be down the road for identification purposes. Whether it is for a potential buyer to be reassured that the horse is the one being considered or bought, to get lost paperwork re-issued, or to recover a stolen horse, "bad pictures" and "bad descriptions" can thwart the needs.

On Appaloosa registration papers the descriptions are taken from the pictures, not from the owner's drawings and descriptions on the application (which more often than not are woefully inaccurate or not done at all). The owner's drawings are merely a tool; the pictures are the proof.

The pictures are copied onto the back of the certificate. Appaloosa papers don't have the horse diagrams on the back with every little hump, dip and curve of the leg and face markings (or scars or brands) drawn in like some other registries do. So to "prove" that *this* set of papers goes with *this* horse, a person can only go by what the description says and by looking at the pictures on the back. The clearer the pictures, the better the proof.

The Appaloosa is the only breed of horse that can change so dramatically over time (gray horses change considerably, too, but gray is a color, not a breed). The only things that don't change on an Appaloosa are the face and leg markings. Appaloosa spots don't change too often, though occasionally they, too, may "migrate". If you have a loud colored leopard or a great blanket with big definitive spots, you will probably never have a problem with changes. But over time, especially after a lot of roaning has occurred, it can look like a *completely* different horse.

And papers get lost. To get duplicate papers, new pictures have to be sent in to prove that this is the same horse as was originally registered. What happens next? The old pictures are taken out of storage and compared to the new pictures. Often, because of the changes through roaning or migrating spots, the *only* thing to prove they are the same horse is to be able to see that the humps, dips and curves of the leg markings are the same on both sets of pictures (or to prove there never were any markings). Due to the roaning that can take place on an Appaloosa's face, a lot of times even the face

markings can be very hard, if not impossible, to determine and match up.

Don't worry about sending in too many pictures. Sometimes that extra shot of a heel marking can be the determining factor someone needs someday to prove that this is indeed the same horse as was originally registered. Yes, it's hard to get a horse to stand still sometimes, especially a baby. But take the required shots for the pictures on the certificate and then keep that camera clicking to get good, *clear* shots of feet and legs, especially if there is some "hard to see" little partial coronet or inside heel or tell-tale scar (if only one leg shows in a picture then please label as to which foot it is).

Although these extra photographs won't appear on the certificate, they will be on file *and* the description on the certificate will be accurate.

Important Pointers

- It's hard to see the markings on a dirty horse so please clean them up, at least brushing the mud off (especially those legs!).
- Pictures of light colored horses need to be taken out of the bright sun, or the glare is too bright to see anything. Sometimes even a good blanket on a light palomino can't be seen if it's taken in the bright sun.
- Palomino and chestnut foals are sometimes especially hard, even in person, to determine if they have leg markings due to the extremely light foal hair on their legs. If you find later that a foal has leg markings that couldn't be seen when it was originally registered then send in more pictures later and have the certificate corrected.
- I've found it best to wait until a foal is about four months old to take registration pictures. By then, they've shed their foal hair so their color is more accurate, as well as the leg markings show up well on light colors such as chestnuts and palominos.
- For those who say "get with the times, accept digital!" ...a lot of times a jewelers loupe is used to try to see small leg markings, marginal mottled skin, scars, brands or partial blue eyes. That doesn't work with digital pictures, it makes all those little pixels show up and nothing but dots can be seen. (**Note: Since this article was written, digital is now accepted and used almost exclusively, so it makes it even more important to have good, clear shots that can be seen by the naked eye.*)

So, please don't think you're being harassed about good pictures. There are good reasons why you need to get good clear shots of the whole horse, tips of the ears to toes, nose to tail, with the insides and outsides of all four legs showing, front and rear, cleaned up and out of the grass. Besides, that certificate will go with the horse for the rest of its life. Don't you want it to have pretty pictures on the back?