



Gypsy Vanner Breed Standard[©]

Gypsy Vanner Horse Society [GVHS]

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The Gypsy Vanner Horse Society's role in the preservation of the traditions and legacy of the breed can only be accomplished through officially recording the generally accepted characteristics and traits that make this breed unique from all other breeds of horses.

A breed standard is a document created by a breed society which carefully describes the genetically acceptable inheritable characteristics and traits of the animals' representative of the breed. The breed standard establishes a visual and written 'target' for breeders to continuously replicate their horses for future generations, while placing a strong emphasis on the characteristics and traits that make the breed unique.



General Appearance and Impression

Overall Image

The first glance, impression of the breed is its stature as a small draft horse. The image is enhanced with abundant, long mane and tail hair, feathering, and substantial muscle development for its size. The presence and quality of the breed reflect in its personality of being gentle, cooperative and willing, yet powerful. The head is characteristically pleasant reflecting gender, with an intelligent eye. The neck comes upward and forward off the shoulder, yielding a tapering set and arch to the neck. The topline is said to be "level" with its natural aligned curvature from wither to tail head. There is proportional curvature to the croup to enhance the powerful abilities of the hindquarters. The muscling is balanced throughout the body with the harmonious blending of all anatomical regions. The legs are straight and correctly aligned, of such substance and definition to be proportional to height and muscular development of the animal.

Coat Color and Patterns

All colors and coat patterns are acceptable in the Registry of the Gypsy Vanner Horse Society.

Coat pattern descriptions:

Tobiano – Broken coat (pinto)

Solid – Solid colored coat

Sabino (Splash) – Solid or Broken coat with white hairs splashed or spread over base color, usually high white legs and facial markings.

Blagdon* - Solid color with white splashed up from underneath

Odd colored* – All other colors and patterns

It is important to note, the Gypsy Vanner is not a breed based on color, although the easily recognizable coat colors, and patterns set the breed apart from others.

Markings

The facial and leg markings follow the traditional descriptive terminology when it is applicable in defining identifiable true white markings. All true white markings have underlying white or 'pink' skin pigmentation. The color of the hooves may be solid or vertically striped, depending upon the leg marking and coloration of the skin immediately about the eruption of the coronary band. White hooves or partially white hooves will have a white leg marking immediately above them.

Height

The height as measured at the withers will normally be between 13.2 hands to 15.2 hands although there may be individuals outside this range. Simply stated, larger or smaller versions of the identical conformation profile and standards are all equally acceptable.

Unique Characteristics

The mane and tail of the Gypsy Vanner may vary from smooth, straight and silky to slight waves. One of the unique characteristics of the breed is the abundance of feathering traditionally found on the fore and hind legs, starting from the knee and hock and extending down and over the hooves. Feathering is the term used to describe the excessive amounts of long hairs on the lower legs, hence the term *horse feathers*. The leg feathering provides natural protection to the legs from the weather and working conditions. The profound hair covering the hooves is referred to in the singular as “feather”.

The horses should have thick, heavy, naturally long flowing manes and tails, only trimmed or braided for neatness of and appearance, or when being shown. The forelock should be full and long covering the eyes, as a natural sort of protection.

The natural, unclipped Gypsy Vanner may have a beard, mustache, with excessive whiskers and muzzle hairs. These are sometimes trimmed or removed, in preparation for competition in the show ring.

Temperament

The temperament of the breed is reflected in its personality and willingness to cooperate with man. Coming from a cold-blooded background, the breed should be relaxed, mannerly, and respectful of its environment. Their willingness should be expressed in their innate attitude of being capable of serving as a riding, driving or draft animal. Horses with unmannerly or vicious behavior must be considered a poor representative of the breed.

Gender

The gender characteristics of the Gypsy Vanner Horse are of vital importance to maintain quality within the breed. Stallions must have masculine characteristics, presence [“a look at me attitude”], curiosity, muscling, and pride, yet always controllable and willing. Mares must reflect the quality along with highly feminine traits. The attitude of the mare is critical in the raising of her foal, as the foal will learn by example; the mare should be easy-going, sensible, and willing.

A stallion three years of age and older must have two, fully descended, normally shaped testicles. The ability to observe the descended testicles may be dependent upon environmental temperatures. In stallions under the age of three, the testicles may be difficult to observe due to development and maturation of the individual.

Head

The overall impression of the head conveys an image of intelligence. It’s size, shape and structure are proportional with the remainder of the anatomical regions. The refinement and delineation of facial features, as well as the definition and shape to the lower jaw, all contribute to the image of the head. The forehead must be flat and broad. The frontal facial bone should be flat to slightly convex, as it blends into a muzzle with sufficiently large nostril openings for the free exchange of air. The lips should be tightly closed.

A pleasant, intelligent head must be the trademark of the breed.

Ears

The size, shape and position of the ears reflect the horse's personality as well as desirable characteristics of the breed. The length and width of the ear should be proportional to the head. The shape should be moderately wide at its middle, providing adequate space for collection of noises and sounds. The originating placement of the ear should be with a slight forward slant, with the ability to rotate from a forward alert position to a backward defensive maneuver, such as pinning the ears. A mare's ears tend to be a bit longer than the stallion, whose ears are short and shapely. The length, shape and position of the ears contribute to the overall image of the horse.

Eyes

The expression and placement of the eye convey alertness, intelligence and kindness.

The eyes must be prominent, placed on the outer edge of the head to maximize the ability of the horse to see peripherally as well as with forward binocular vision. The eye should be large in its external structure and appearance. The distance between the eyes should be wider than the base of the ears and be located about 60-65% of the distance between the muzzle and the poll-

The color of the eyes will vary from solid to party-color regardless of coat color. Partial and solid colors of blues and browns are acceptable, along with a white sclera.

Bite

The point where the central incisors meet must be equal and even as viewed from the side. A slight deviation is possible without fault if the teeth vary no more than one half the width of the tooth's surface. The slight deviation could occur with either the upper or the lower jaw. The accuracy of the bite may vary according to age, and the dental maturation due to the growth and development of the pre-molars and molars. In young, developing horses the pre-molars and molars erupt, and move into location. While this maturation process is occurring the alignment of the teeth and jaw can vary.

Neck

The set, length and arch of the horse's neck are very important to its use and athletic ability. The neck serves many vital functions all associated with its ability for lifting, elevation, flexion, and lateral movement. The neck should rise upward and forward tapering towards the throatlatch with no bulky underline. The topside of the neck should be arched, but not cresty or excessively heavy. The neck should be long enough for the horse to shift its body weight into a balanced frame, thereby placing more body weight proportionally on the hind legs than normal, enabling the ability for impulsion from the hindquarters.

The lower neckline should rise upward and forward from a well sloped shoulder, departing sufficiently from above the point of the shoulder. The underline of the neck should taper into the throatlatch, allowing for freedom and width of entry into the lower mandible. The definition of the jugular groove should be prominent.

The upper neckline [crest] should be arched and well muscled in both the mare and stallion, with more prominence desired and expected in the stallion. When standing at the rear of the horse, the neckline from the top of the withers to the poll must be a straight line, with only slight deviations. The upper neckline must demonstrate power, strength and flexibility.

The length, shape and ability for the horse to use the neck determines its natural athletic ability. It must be remembered, the Gypsy Vanner necks tend to have more powerful muscling than many breeds, due to the genetic selection for these horses to be used in draft related activities, strong necks that easily fit the philosophy of form to function.

Body

The overall impression of the Gypsy Vanner's body is one of harmony and muscular proportionality with all its collective anatomical regions. The balance and proportions go from the point of the shoulder to the buttock, point of the hip to stifle, wither to elbow, and foreflank to rearflank, and length of the back in relationship to the coupling and croup to tail head. All from the profile view provide a balance and proportionality, with the blending of the anatomical regions.

From the front and rear views, the width of the point of the shoulders, the spring and shape to the ribs, width and development of the chest, width of the hips, width of the stifles, definition of muscling in the rear quarters and stifle region and shape to the hip and croup, contribute to the balance and harmony, and more importantly the powerful athletic ability of the horse.

In viewing the body of the Gypsy Vanner, the muscle structure must convey the image of an athletically muscled horse, with smooth round muscles. Short, bunched, bulky muscles are not desired. Likewise, the amount and size of bone should be substantial and yet, defined proportionately. The substantial bone must reflect the workmanlike image of a draft animal, to sustain loading and stress. The legs of the horse should clearly exemplify defined joints in the leg, in proportion to the diameter of cannon and pastern bones. The knee, hock and fetlock should be obvious junctures of the leg structure, all proportional to the substance and muscle of the body.

Shoulder

The shoulder is an important attachment point of the neck and the forelegs. Therefore, it is one of the most important anatomical regions impacting form to function, providing a natural "home" for the collar and hames, as well as the ability to flex forward for the extension and reach of the movement at the walk, trot and canter.

As viewed from the side, the shoulder should have a slope of 50 degrees, with deviations observed +/-5 degrees. The slope of the shoulder can be viewed from the most prominent [center] point of the withers with an imaginary line being drawn to the point of the shoulder. When a base horizontal line is added to the point of the shoulder, the (angle) slope of the shoulder should be apparent.

In partnership with the slope, the angle of the shoulder can be determined by extending an imaginary line from the point of shoulder to the elbow. The bone connecting the point

of the shoulder with the elbow is the arm. The length and angle of attachment of the arm to the elbow joint affects the shoulder's ability to lift and move the forelimb forward for all gaits. A long arm is more desirable, resulting with the placement of the foreleg under the center of the body, closer to its natural center of gravity. It is undesirable to have legs appearing to attach close to the point of the shoulder, as this affects stride and support of the body by the forelimb.

The shoulder must be covered with sufficient muscling to protect the shoulder while allowing the horse to have the full ability to perform as a powerful athlete.

Withers

The withers are the departure point of the neck up, and forward, as well as the jointure of both shoulders [scapulas]. The withers should be identifiable and visible with sufficient muscle cover to protect the bone-

Back and Coupling/Loin

The Gypsy Vanner's back starts at the withers and goes toward the tail, until it reaches the last lumbar vertebrae. The back must be short and strong, with a slight curvature allowing the horse the ability to become "round", flexible through the middle upper body.

As the back terminates at the last rib, the coupling/loin section connects the back with the croup. The coupling/loin area adds to the horse's strength and lateral flexibility of the body. The length of the coupling/loin area will vary but must be proportional and balanced to all other anatomical regions of the horse. The proportional length of the combined back and coupling/loin of a horse is important in establishing a strong, athletic topline.

Mares may have longer coupling/loin areas than stallions and geldings, which permits greater capacity for expansion of a pregnancy.

Croup/Hip

Blending from the coupling/loin region toward the rear, the croup follows the dorsal topline to the Gypsy Vanner's tailhead. When the croup is combined with the back and coupling/loin, the three anatomical regions make-up the region referred to as the topline. The croup serves as a point for visually measuring the length of the hip and to define the amount of muscling in the hindquarters.

When viewed from the side, the mid-line of the croup should be rounded, with a gentle slope and a well-set tail on a powerful hindquarter. From the rear, the muscles from point of the hip over the top to the other point of the hip, coming back to the tailhead, must be round, wide and reflect powerful athletic ability. The strength of the hindquarters defines the breed as being a small draft horse, a horse designed for strength and power, but with class, presence and style.

To establish the length and angle of the hip, an imaginary line from the point of the hip is drawn to the point of buttock. The length of this imaginary line should be slightly longer than the overall length of the topline of the croup. The point of the hip and the point of buttock should be on an imaginary horizontal line which defines the length of the hip. If

the tailhead is lower than the imaginary horizontal line from the point of hip to the point of buttock, the hip/croup will be approaching too steep an angle for the Gypsy Vanner.

Chest

The chest, when viewed from the front, will have prominent, well developed, powerful pectoral muscles, providing sufficient separation of the forelegs for correct movement of the forelimbs at all gaits. The width of the chest is an important indicator of the muscular strength of the horse and the capacity of the thoracic cavity, allowing for sufficient space for heart and lungs.

In a horse with a narrow chest, the horse's lower forelegs will have the increased ability to interfere with each other while in motion. Whereas, the horse with the excessively wide chest requires outward, forward rotating movement of the forelimbs, which reduces the ability to provide the continuous powerful forward movement expected for draft type horses.

Barrel of the Body

The body of the Gypsy Vanner must be deep, and wide, reflecting the ability to protect and provide capacity for the vital organs, including the heart and lungs. The ribs must be curved, not flat as observed from the front view. From the side view, the line from just behind the elbow to the rear flank should follow a gentle curve terminating just in front of the stifle. A Gypsy Vanner should not be 'cut-up' in the rear flank, giving the appearance of being tucked up, lacking abdominal capacity.

Forelegs

From the elbow to the ground, the forelegs must be structurally, straight, correct columns of strength to support the weight and movement of the horse. Although the entire leg is additionally comprised of the shoulder and arm, it is the lower regions of the foreleg that command attention for assessment of structural correctness.

When viewed from the front, the legs must be plumb and true, with front view imaginary lines passing vertically down through the center of the knee, on through the center of the fetlock joint, continuing down through the pastern to the center of the hoof. When viewed from the side, the leg follows a similar alignment, passing down the leg through the center of the knee, down the cannon through the center of the fetlock, to the heel of the hoof.

Deviations from these imaginary lines are considered defects in structure and may be the cause for unsoundness of the limbs when stress, strain and concussion are applied through use. Therefore, the amount and size of bone should be heavy to medium, with clearly defined joints, which are plumb and true. The substance of bone must reflect the workmanlike image to sustain loading and stress of an athletic animal.

The legs of the horse should have clearly defined joints, in proportion to the diameter of cannon and pastern bones. The knees, hocks and fetlocks should be obvious junctures of the leg structure, with heavy to middle bone.

The forearm to cannon ratio needs to be at least 55% to 45%, respectively, with the

forearm always longer than the cannon. The length of the pastern needs to be proportional to the remainder of the leg. The fore-pastern and hoof angle should be equal to provide strength and support to the lower leg.

The hooves of the horse must be of a size and proportion to properly support the horse in all athletic uses. The hooves must have symmetrical shape, with ample width and angle at the heels. Flat hooves with low heels are not desirable. Although the lower legs of the Gypsy Vanner are typically covered with feather, the pasterns and hooves must not be ignored and need to be correct and sound.

Care must be taken to maintain athletic form to function structure. The forelegs should be neither too narrow nor too wide.

Hindlegs

The hindlegs of the Gypsy Vanner have the same characteristics and traits of the forelegs. Those include the definition of the bone and joints, size and shape of the hooves, length of the pastern, and the slightly base narrow leg position.

When viewed from the rear, an imaginary line can be dropped from the buttock, passing over the point of the hock, down the center of the rear cannon, passing to the rear of the fetlock onto to the ground terminating in the center of the heel of the hoof. Upon viewing the hind hooves from the rear, the placement of hooves and lower leg will be slightly turned toe-out, with the horse being narrower in the placement of the hindlegs than the forelegs.

When viewing the imaginary plumb line from the profile the line will touch the point of the hock, lying parallel to the back of the cannon to the fetlock and then directly to the ground in the center of the heel. From the profile view, the leg should be plumb and true.

The muscular composition of the hindleg begins in the hindquarter and buttocks and carries downward to the stifle and onto the inner and outer gaskin. The rear view of the hindleg must reveal heavy smooth muscles in the gaskin, with the outer gaskin being large and round, whereas the inside gaskin will be less muscular, appearing flat when comparing the inner and outer gaskins. The muscular strength of the horse is defined in the area from the gaskin to the stifle up to the point of the hip and back to the buttock.

The pastern and hoof angles of the hindlegs will be more toward the vertical, usually over 50 degrees, when compared to the same anatomical region on the forelegs.

Movement at the Walk

The walk for the Gypsy Vanner is a natural forward flowing four beat gait.

The length of stride reflects the power of impulsion from the muscular hindquarters, with a slight overstep of stride. This stride can vary from a laid-back amble, to a powerful, purposeful gait. The shoulder must move forward in a free, unrestricted reach, with this motion carried down the entire length of the limb. The knee and hock action must be balanced in elevation and reach as the horse moves forward with pride. The pride in the breed is expressed in the head and neck carriage, being elevated in the movement, alert

with presence, naturally shifting the center of gravity toward the hindquarters, keeping the horse in balance and form.

It must be remembered, the walk is the initial gait for a draft type of horse to move their load, therefore the Gypsy Vanner must move with deliberate forward, powerful strides

Movement at the Trot

The trot for the Gypsy Vanner is a natural forward, free flowing two beat diagonal gait.

The pride of the breed is best expressed in watching these horses trot, with an unrestricted style of movement, yet having the natural ability to extend the gait when requested. The athletic function of the knees and hocks are synchronized in their movement. The horse will travel with its head slightly elevated, flexed at the poll, and neck carried in a natural arch. The shoulders are supple, and the hocks are engaged.

The athletic ground covering trot of the Gypsy Vanner is a “trademark” of the horse’s powerful fancy image. The Gypsy Vanner’s conformation allows them to trot willingly and freely under a load and at liberty.

Movement at the Canter

The canter for the Gypsy Vanner is a natural flowing three beat gait. The Gypsy Vanner is very capable of performing a natural three beat canter when the horse is collected and ridden in a balanced frame.

Unacceptable Characteristics and Traits

Clean legged horses (no feather)

Aggressive behavior.

Definable malocclusions

Stallions, 3 years of age and older without 2 fully descended, normal testicles.

Broken crests

Overly sloped croup (goose rump)