Highland Coat Color

The coat color phenotype in cattle depends on multiple genes. The Veterinary Genetics Laboratory offers testing for Extension (*MC1R* gene) and Dilution (*PMEL17* gene).

The table below shows the expected phenotype based on the various possible genotype combinations of these two genes. While these two loci together explain some coat color phenotypes in Highland cattle, it is important to note that other, yet unknown, genes may influence the resulting coat color observed and the animal may have a different phenotype than what is predicted by the Extension and Dilution genotypes alone.

Extension (*MC1R*)	**Dun Dilution (*PMEL17*)**	**Coat Color Phenotype Predictions**
E+/E+	N/N	Red
E+/e	N/N	Red
e/e	N/N	Red
E+/E+	Dh/N	Yellow
E+/e	Dh/N	Yellow
e/e	Dh/N	Yellow
E+/E+	Dh/Dh	White/cream
E+/e	Dh/Dh	White/cream
e/e	Dh/Dh	White/cream
ED/ED	N/N	Black
ED/E+	N/N	Black
ED/e	N/N	Black
ED/ED	Dh/N	Dun
ED/E+	Dh/N	Dun
ED/e	Dh/N	Dun
ED/ED	Dh/Dh	Silver Dun (CAN) or Silver (USA)*
ED/E+	Dh/Dh	Silver Dun (CAN) or Silver (USA)*
ED/e	Dh/Dh	Silver Dun (CAN) or Silver (USA)*

Table 1: Coat color phenotypes based on Extension and Dilution genotypes. *Adapted from Schmutz SM, Dreger DL. (2013) doi: 10.1111/j.1365-2052.2012.02361.x.*

** The Canadian Highland Cattle Society uses the term "Silver Dun" whereas the American Highland Cattle Association refers to this phenotype as "Silver*

For more detailed information about these coat color genes, please visit our website at https://vgl.ucdavis.edu/test/mc1r-cattle and https://vgl.ucdavis.edu/test/cattle-dilution