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Branding Livestock

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Branding is a long-recognized and widely-used means of identifying livestock. It is an excellent method of identifying ownership, and good legible brands may offer protection against livestock theft. In range areas, branding is essential for establishing ownership at roundup time.

In the past Missouri law provided for registration of brands at the county level which only prevented duplication within a county. Increased cattle rustling the past few years brought renewed interest in branding among livestock men.

Missouri's 76th General Assembly responded to the livestock industry by providing for brand registry at the state level. This Guide includes the essential points of the Missouri Livestock Brand Registry Law passed in 1971.

Missouri Branding Law and Registry

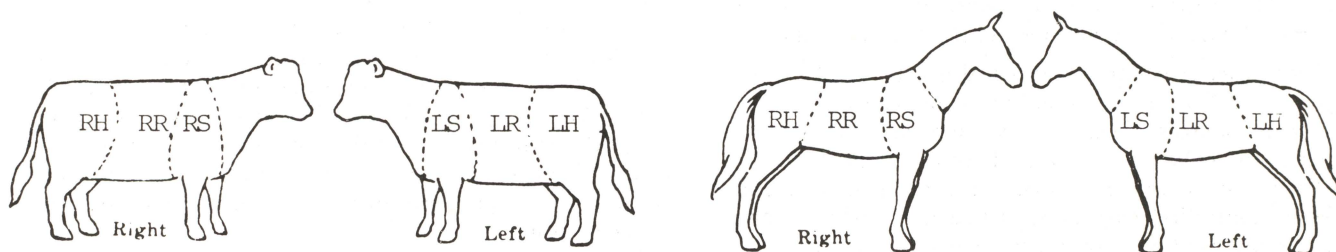
1. It shall be unlawful to use any ownership brand for branding horses, cattle, sheep, mules or asses unless such brand has been properly recorded with the State Commissioner of Agriculture.
2. Recorded brands must be renewed each five years.
3. The only legal brand for ownership purposes is a hot iron brand on the hide of the animal. Other types of brands may be used for within-herd identification.
4. Brands must be at least 3 inches in height and width and contain at least two characters which may be symbols, letters, Arabic numerals, or a combination of these.
5. Arabic numerals (1, 2, 3, 4) can be used for within-herd identification purposes and need not be recorded. These

identification numbers must be at least 10 inches from the ownership brand.

6. Ownership brands can be applied in one of six possible locations. Facing the rear of the animal, these are right hip, right rib, right shoulder; and left hip, left rib, left shoulder.
7. A legally-registered brand shall be prima facie evidence in questions of livestock ownership. It is important that you receive and retain a bill of sale showing transfer of ownership of branded animals.
8. The initial cost of registering a brand will be \$15. At the end of the first year a maintenance fee of \$10 is due and every five years thereafter.
9. The Brand Registry shall be maintained by the State Commissioner of Agriculture. Correspondence should be sent to:

Brand Registry Section
Veterinary Division
Missouri Department of Agriculture
P. O. Box 630
Jefferson City, Mo. 65101

Application forms for brand registration are available by writing the above, University Missouri County Extension Centers, or Missouri Cattlemen's Association, Ashland, Mo. 65010. The Cattlemen's Association will assist in selection of brands and other branding problems.

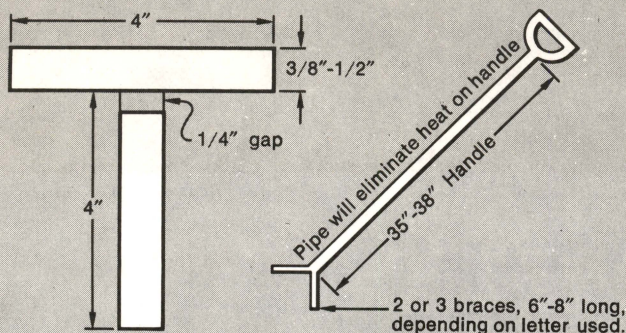


RS - Right Shoulder
LS - Left Shoulder

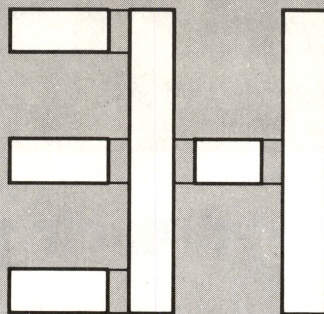
RR - Right Rib
LR - Left Rib

RH - Right Hip
LH - Left Hip

Size and Dimensions



Combination of Letters



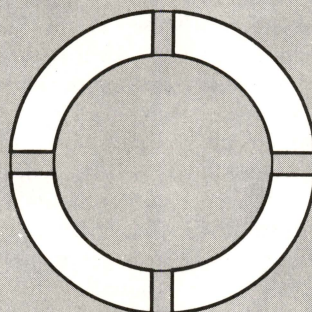
It is not recommended that brands of this type be combined in one iron. It is hard to handle and is difficult to apply on the animal evenly. Separate irons for the E and a running iron for the H may take a little longer, but the results will be well worth the time.

Closed or Circular Brands



This B iron is made up in one piece, but has five gaps cut into the face of it to allow extra heat to escape and therefore eliminate blotching. Another method of making a B would be to use a 3 and a bar iron. (13)

The Letter "O"



The letter O has had gaps cut to allow heat to escape. It is recommended that branding irons of this nature be made slightly larger than those consisting of straight lines to eliminate blotching.

Branding Equipment

Good, properly designed equipment is essential for a good job of branding. Ranchers who brand with hot irons have two alternatives: (1) individual irons with separate heating source, and (2) electric branding iron with heating element in the branding surface. Electric irons are relatively new but are gaining popularity, particularly in small herds.

Iron, steel, and stainless steel are the most popular materials for branding irons. Copper is satisfactory although it is more easily burned up in the heating process. Length of the handle of the iron varies with personal preference. Most people prefer a 30- to 38-inch handle. The face of the iron that contacts the skin should be 1/4- to 1/2-inch wide; a 3/8- to 1/2-inch face is usually preferred. The narrower-faced, light-weight iron is usually preferred for horses. At the junction of two pieces of metal, such as an upright joining the cross bar in a "T", there should be a 1/4-inch gap in the face of the iron to eliminate concentration of heat. See illustrations.

Sizes of letter or figures preferred usually are 3 inches for calves and 4- or 5-inch irons for mature cattle.

Popular sources of heat for branding irons include butane and wood. Wood fire is used satisfactorily by many cattlemen, but butane is popular because it is convenient and easily controlled. Coal fires, particularly with blowers, are not recommended because they readily burn the irons.

Good restraining equipment that gives accessibility to the brand location is highly desirable. Such equipment for handling calves may not be necessary.

Some people prefer to clip the hair at the brand site prior to branding, although this is not necessary and most experienced branders do not need to clip the hair to get good brands.

When using the electric branding iron, be sure the voltage at the branding iron is satisfactory. Inadequate wire size, either in the lead-in from the transformer or the extension cords, will result in improper heating; consequently, a poor brand.

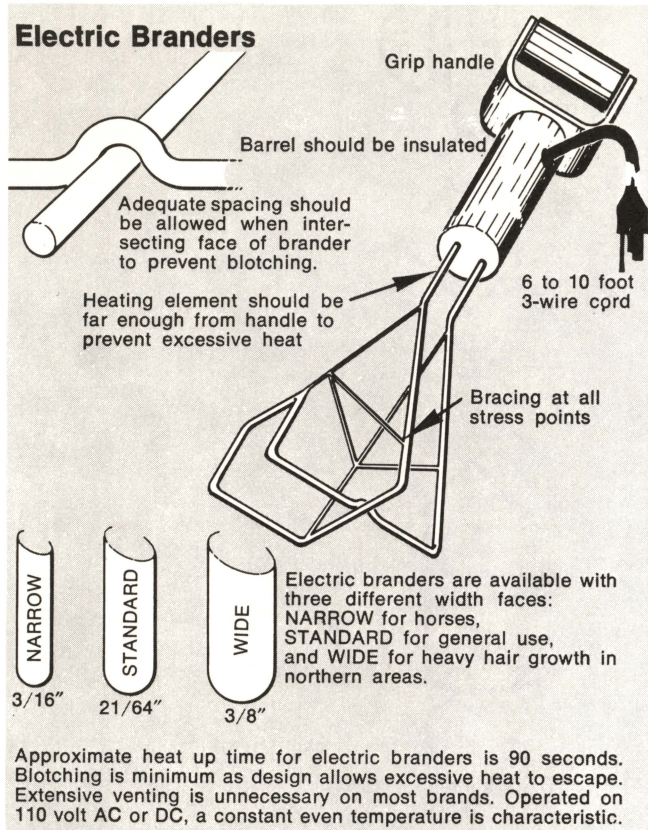
Branding Tips

The objective of a good brand is a well-defined scar from which no hair will grow. This is accomplished by burning only the outer layer of skin. A properly-burned brand is easily read when hair is clipped from the brand location.

Proper equipment and technique, plus experience, help in getting good brands on cattle.

1. Before you start to brand make sure your irons are clean and free of rust or charred material. Keep the irons clean as you brand. A wire brush works well. The best care is to clean your irons thoroughly after use and oil them lightly. Some people store the irons in a bucket of oil.
2. The irons should be heated until they are an ash-gray color. There is probably a tendency to overheat an iron instead of underheating it.
3. If you are branding without clipping and the hair bursts into flame, the iron is too hot.
4. Remember, only burn through the hair, and then burn the first layer of skin.

Electric Branders



- The animal must be well-restrained so the iron does not slip, which would result in a splotched, illegible brand.
- Experience will show you the proper length of application to the animal. As a start try for a three-to-five-second application.
- When the branding iron is removed from the animal, the branded area should appear as a saddle-leather color.
- Some people like to apply a light application of oil or grease to the branding site immediately after branding which perhaps might make healing more uniform. Don't brand cattle when the hair is wet or if animals have been recently treated with an oil base material, such as a pour-on insecticide.
- When applying a branding iron to the animal, using a rocking motion with the iron firmly against the animal will result in a better brand with a more even distribution of heat to the skin.

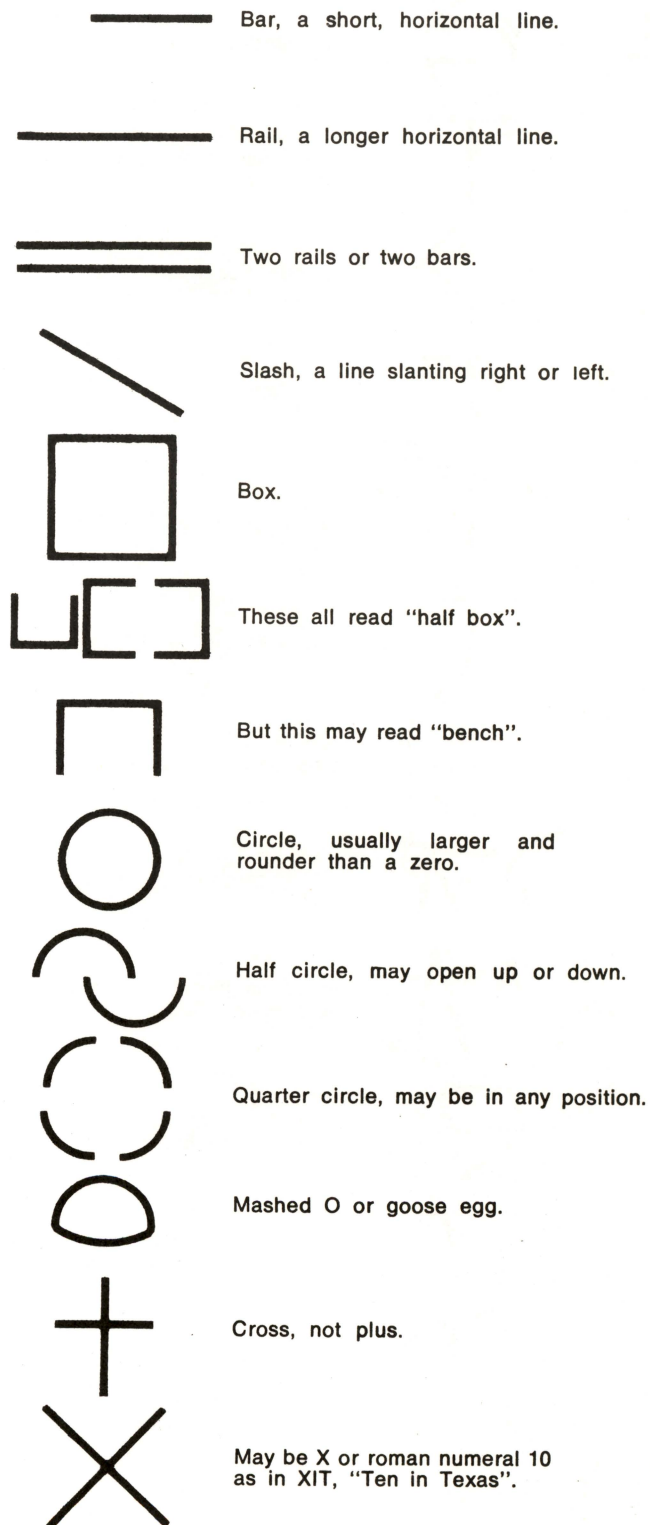
Selecting Your Brand

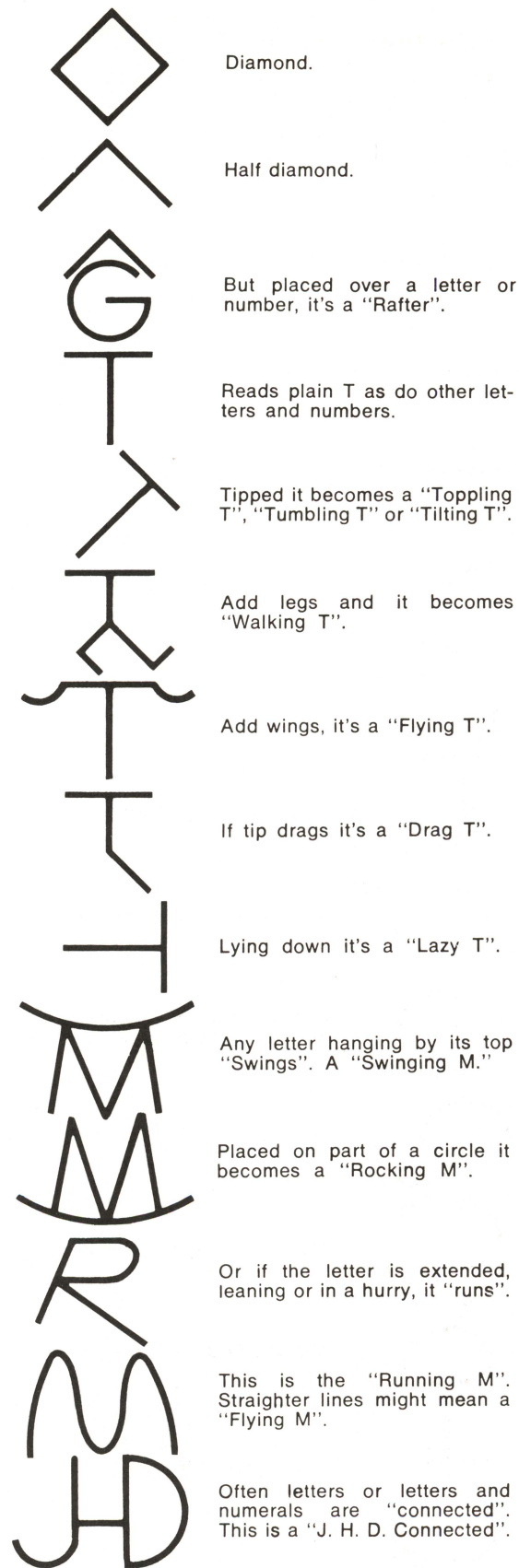
Under Missouri law all hot iron brands must be registered with the State Commissioner of Agriculture. The brand must consist of at least two characters which may be symbols, letters, Arabic numerals, or a combination of these.

Simple designs are the easiest to construct and probably easiest to read. Sharp angles, small circles (such as you get with a "B") should be avoided as you get great concentration of heat resulting in smeary, blotchy kinds of brands. This may be partially overcome by thinning the iron or cutting a groove in it at these "extra hot points."

How to Read a Brand

Brands are read from left to right and from top to bottom. It's easy and interesting once you learn these simple rules. Here are a few brand symbols used in combination, and straight brands that will give you the idea:





Diamond.

Half diamond.

But placed over a letter or number, it's a "Rafter".

Reads plain T as do other letters and numbers.

Tipped it becomes a "Toppling T", "Tumbling T" or "Tilting T".

Add legs and it becomes "Walking T".

Add wings, it's a "Flying T".

If tip drags it's a "Drag T".

Lying down it's a "Lazy T".

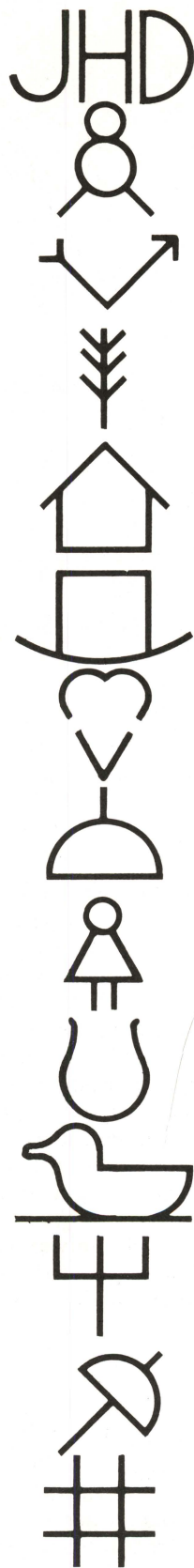
Any letter hanging by its top "Swings". A "Swinging M."

Placed on part of a circle it becomes a "Rocking M".

Or if the letter is extended, leaning or in a hurry, it "runs".

This is the "Running M". Straighter lines might mean a "Flying M".

Often letters or letters and numerals are "connected". This is a "J. H. D. Connected".



"J.H.D. Disconnected."

Camp kettle.

Broken arrow.

Tree.

House.

Hat.

Broken heart.

Stirrup.

Dollbaby.

Fiddleback.

Duckbar.

Pitchfork.

Umbrella.

Pigpen.

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