

Why Brand?

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Introduction

Ever since the white men first came to the North American continent, cattle have played a very important part in their development and livelihood.

The use of brands as a mark for identification dates back some 4000 years. Egyptians branded their cattle as early as 2000 B.C. Their idea no doubt was to make sure that ownership of an animal could be established no matter where it was found.

The first history of the use of brands on the North American continent was by Hernando Cortez in 1521 when he branded a small bunch of longhorns which he unloaded from a ship in what is now Old Mexico. Later, huge herds of cattle were branded with the family coat of arms by the Mexican Dons. As the cattle industry grew and moved northward into Texas, this method of establishing ownership of livestock became accepted by the American rancher.

The first system of brand recording in North America was in the State of California where the Spaniards had located and were running thousands of cattle. Those who wished to record a brand were required to file a section of the hide carrying the owner's brand or the imprint of the branding iron on a piece of leather.

All the western provincial and state governments have recognized the necessity of protecting livestock owners and have provided for the recording of brands and a livestock inspection program. The method of brand registration and requirements under the livestock inspection program vary in each instance, but all have the same purpose. This is to establish ownership of cattle and horses wherever they may be encountered through the use of registered brand. With the advent of bison ranching in British Columbia, bison brands are now included on the provincial registry.

Why Brand?

A brand is a permanent mark applied to the hide of livestock for the purpose of establishing ownership. The owner of a registered brand is offered protection by the livestock inspection service and the police against the loss of branded stock that may have strayed or are being harboured, knowingly or unknowingly, by someone else. A properly recorded brand is prima facie evidence in any court that livestock so branded are owned by the registered owner of that brand.

Brand Registration

It is not compulsory to brand livestock in British Columbia. There is, however, one exception to this rule and that is that horses over the apparent age of six months, north of the 57th parallel of north latitude which are not registered under the terms of the Livestock Pedigree Act of Canada, must be branded.

It is unlawful for anyone to use an unregistered brand or a brand for which the registration has expired.

Cattle, horse and bison brands are considered to be three different brands even though they may be identical in configuration; consequently they must be registered as separate brands.

Cattle brands are registered in six positions; shoulder, rib, and hip – left or right side. Horse brands are registered in six positions: upper back – left or right side; shoulder and hip – left or right side. Bison brands are registered in two positions: hip – left or right side.

Applications to register a cattle, horse and bison brand are to be submitted to:

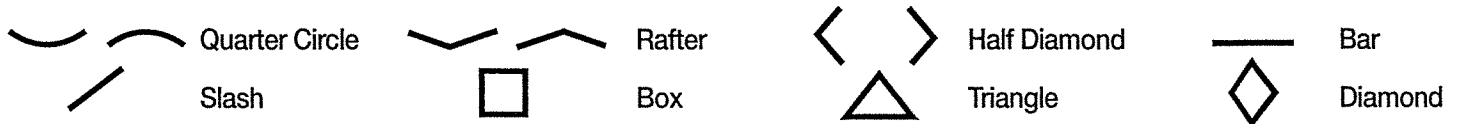
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The application form prepared by OII for this purpose is to be used. The brand application form is to be accompanied by the prescribed registration fee for each brand being registered. Cheques, money orders, etc., are to be made payable to OII. The initial brand registration will be good for a period of four years. Brand owners can renew their brand registrations at four-year intervals thereafter upon payment of the prescribed renewal fee for each four-year period. Brand renewal notices are sent to each brand owner three months prior to the expiration of their brand. Brand ownership can be legally transferred only by recording the transfer with OII. Transfer forms are obtainable from your local livestock inspector.

Brand Design Policy

The basic design will consist of a combination of characters (numbers and letters) and symbols, with at least two being used. The symbols that can be used are



It is important that the design can be easily read by the inspectors. As well, the brands must be able to be described verbally.

The following characters will not be registered:

G As it conflicts with C

Q As it conflicts with O

∃ Reverse "E" as it conflicts with 3 (three)

⌋ Inverted reverse "L" as it conflicts with 7 (seven)

2 Reverse "S" as it conflicts with 2 (two)

5 as it conflicts with S

8 as it conflicts with B

Blotching of brands is a problem. As a result characters within symbols are not allowed. Certain connected characters also cause problems, e.g. **LB**, **HA**, **WK**, **BR** and will not be registered.

The brand viewed as MP and described as M connected P, is protected by the RCMP Intellectual Property Rights as a trademark for all horse brand locations. Therefore the previously described brand is not available for public use on horses in the province of British Columbia.

The following letters can be used in the reverse position: B, D, F, G, K, R, C.

The following letters can be used in the lazy left or right position: A, B, D, E, F, H, M, P, R, S, T, U.

The following letters can be used in the inverted position: J, L, T, U, Y

No letters can be used in the inverted reverse position.

Written or Script letters will not be registered.

All numbers must be in the normal vertical position.

Half diamonds will be registered with the ends pointing toward the brand characters.

Three character brands will be registered in the rib position only. i.e. COW.

Cattle brands can be registered in six positions: left and right shoulder, left and right rib and left and right hip.

Horse brands can be registered in six positions: left and right shoulder, left and right hip, and left and right upper back.

Bison brands can be registered on the left or right hip.





Single character brands may be issued for feedlot operator's use only.

Brands that are currently registered that do not conform with this policy will not be taken out of use provided they are always renewed on time or legally transferred. Should a brand that does not conform be allowed to expire, it will be removed from the Brand Registry and not be reissued.


The above Policy will be rigidly followed so that brands can be easily read by the Livestock Inspector, brands can be described in a simple verbal description and the whole brand structure be easily indexed by the computer.

How To Read A Brand


With approximately 6000 brands registered in the province of BC, it is not difficult to imagine the different descriptions used for the same brand. The following descriptions should help one in describing a brand in the correct manner.

When reading a brand it is important to remember it must be read from left to right or from the top character to the bottom character.  is called a rafter when it is above a character and an inverted rafter  when below a character. Beside a character would be a half diamond  or .

A quarter circle above a character is called quarter circle points up  or quarter circle points down .


Slashes are described as a slash in this position .




A horizontal bar  beside or between two characters is called a running bar.







Characters can be registered in a lazy position such as  which is lazy A left. Most of these are in the lazy left position.

Characters that are upside down are referred to as inverted.

Brands where the characters are connected are referred to as connected,  is called **HA** connected.

Characters that are connected at the bottom such as  would be called **L** hanging **J** connected.

Some older brands have a character inside such as  or . The brand would be read with the outside character first and the inside character last, an  would be referred to as **O J** inside.

Since brands were first registered there have been many changes to the legal registering of a brand. There are some characters that are not necessarily above or below in the above-mentioned descriptions but you would still read the characters as the guideline outlines. For instance there are some quarter circles above a letter with the points down  or a rafter below a character . The BC Brand Registration goes back to the early 1900's and since its inception there have been symbols used as brands. They do not conform to any standard description so the description is based upon what the brand looks like, a  is called a open pitch fork, an  is called arrow right. There are some brands that have written letters, these are called script, such as  is a script **M** or  is a script **A**.

There are other variations but the above-mentioned descriptions would cover nearly every brand in B.C.

Branding Techniques

Prior to impressing a brand on livestock it is necessary that you obtain a registered brand from OII. Once you have received your brand registration certificate, you can have irons made and brand livestock that you own.

Your brand certificate will indicate the brand and position on the animal that has been allotted to you. It is critical that you brand in the exact location since someone else in BC may have the same brand but in a different location than you.

It is critical that the animal be restrained as much as possible. This may be accomplished by manually wrestling to the ground, the use of a calf table or a cattle squeeze for larger animals.

Hot Branding

The animals must be dry. If the hide is wet, it robs the iron of heat and causes scalding resulting in a blotched brand.

Clipping the area to be branded improves the quality of the brand. It also speeds up the branding process. This would also reveal if there currently is a brand in the same location that your brand is. If this is the case brand above, below, behind or in front of the previous brand. It is an offence under the Livestock Identification Act to alter, obliterate or deface a brand already on the animal. Do not apply your brand in another position as it is possible it may be registered to someone else in that position.

It is critical that the iron be at the correct temperature for the impression to be successful. Electric irons maintain a fairly constant temperature so generally there is little to worry about. However with steel irons, if the irons are too cold the brand will be unsuccessful while if the irons are too hot, the hide will be burnt more than required.

The degree of heat can be determined by the colour of the iron. A black iron will be too cold and will burn the hair but not the hide. A red-hot iron is too hot resulting in burnt hair, an excessive burn to the hide and generally a blotched brand. The correct colour for the iron would be a wood-ash gray. This would burn the hide sufficiently to deform the roots of the hair follicles. This is necessary for the new hair to grow at a different angle than the original hair so the brand is visible.

Irons can be heated by wood or propane. Using wood, start with a large fire and let it burn down to a bed of red-hot coals. The irons should be kept on top of the coals and not in the flame of the fire. Using propane, it is recommended that a steel drum or large pipe be used to contain the heat supplied by a tiger torch. With both methods, be sure the irons are a wood ash colour before applying them to the animal.

The hot iron should be applied to the animal firmly and then rock the handle slightly to assure that the brand characters are applied evenly. This prevents under burning or over burning. When the iron is removed in three to five seconds, the hide should be a buckskin colour and look like saddle leather. If the iron is removed too early, a temporary brand (hair brand) will be left that will soon disappear. In this situation, take extreme care to apply the iron a second time in the exact same location to avoid any blotching.

Freeze Branding

NOTE: Section 6.4 Equine Code of Practice/Husbandry Practices:

- Freeze Branding is the preferred method of permanent identification on horses.

This is a technique where a super cold branding iron is applied to the hide which kills the pigment producing cells resulting in the growth of white hair instead of coloured hair. It works successfully on both cattle and horses.

The resulting brand will be readable at any time of the year and, if applied properly, will seldom blotch. The disadvantage is that extra care must be taken in the application of the brand, it is necessary to clip the site closely and a source of refrigerant must be available. The process takes longer than hot iron branding and the irons should be made of copper or stainless steel. The irons should be thicker and deeper in order to keep the face of the iron cold. The face should be ½" (12.5 mm) thick with the corners well rounded.

The irons must be cooled in a container of dry ice and 99% alcohol or in liquid nitrogen (best). Liquid nitrogen is available from artificial insemination units and welding supply firms.

The animal must be restrained – a squeeze for cattle and a twitch for horses. The site where the brand will be applied must be clipped and then washed with alcohol to remove any dust or dirt. Immediately prior to applying the iron, saturate the branding site with alcohol at room temperature. Apply the iron to the site with firm pressure and for the proper time as indicated below.

Colt	Liquid Nitrogen	Horse	Liquid Nitrogen	Calf	Liquid Nitrogen	Cow	Liquid Nitrogen
	6-12 seconds		8-12 seconds		21-24 seconds		25-30 seconds
	Dry Ice & Alcohol		Dry Ice & Alcohol		Dry Ice & Alcohol		Dry Ice & Alcohol
	16-24 seconds		20-24 second		40-50 seconds		50-60 seconds

On white haired animals, the time should be increased by at least 10 seconds to completely destroy the hair growth.

Acid Burning

This method of branding is illegal in British Columbia.

Branding Irons

Hot Irons

Irons should be constructed with materials that will hold heat well. A good quality steel or stainless steel is the best. Stainless steel can withstand extreme heat without burning up. Copper is not recommended.

The steel used should be good quality and heavy enough to hold the heat. For cattle the metal should be 2" (50 mm) by 1/2" (12 mm). The face of the branding surface should be worked down to 3/8" (10 mm) in width. A 3/8" (10 mm) ready rod is ideal when welded to the face of the iron.

If two or more pieces of metal join on the face of the iron, a notch at least 3/8" (10 mm) wide and 3/8" (10 mm) deep should be cut away at the join to allow heat to escape. This will lessen the chance of blotching at that spot.

Sharp edges on all branding iron faces should be ground or filed off. A thin or burned up iron should not be used as it will cut into the hide and leave a narrow scar that will cover easily with hair.

It is recommended that each iron have only one character. If two or more characters are on one handle, there is a chance that the characters will heat and burn unevenly. As well this multi-character iron will tend to slip and leave a poor brand.

Electric Irons

The use of electric irons is becoming more common. It is essential that the use of extension cords be kept to a minimum for the irons to work effectively. It is recommended that there be no more than two characters on a single handle in order to meet the size requirements.

Iron Sizes

Calves Under 3 Months

When under three months of age, the face of the iron must not be less than 3/16" (4.5 mm) in width and not less than 2" (50 mm) in height and 1 1/2" (38 mm) wide. The space between characters must be no less than 3/4" (18.75 mm).

Cattle & Calves Over 3 Months

The face of the iron must not be less than 3/8" (10 mm) in width and not less than 3" (75 mm) in height and 2" (50 mm) wide. The space between characters must be no less than 1" (25 mm).

Cattle & Calves Over 3 Months

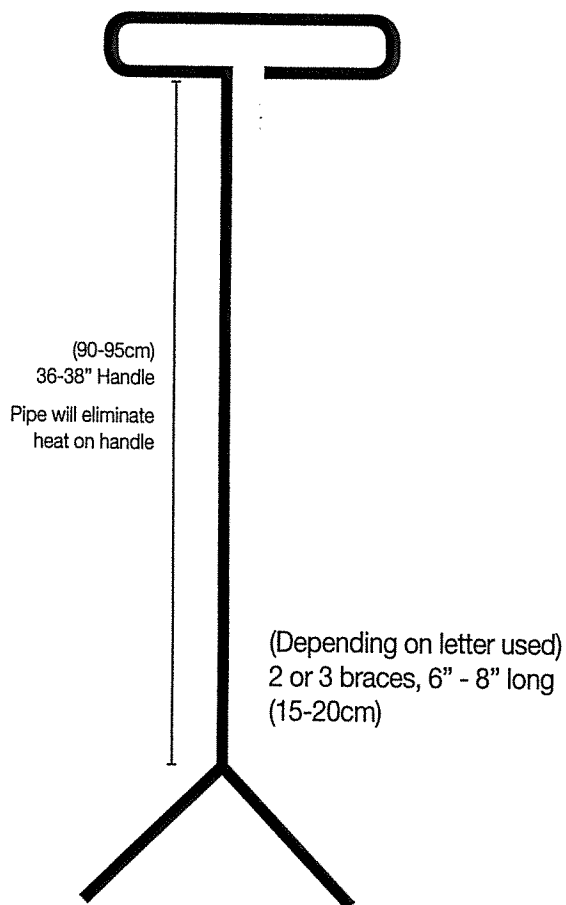
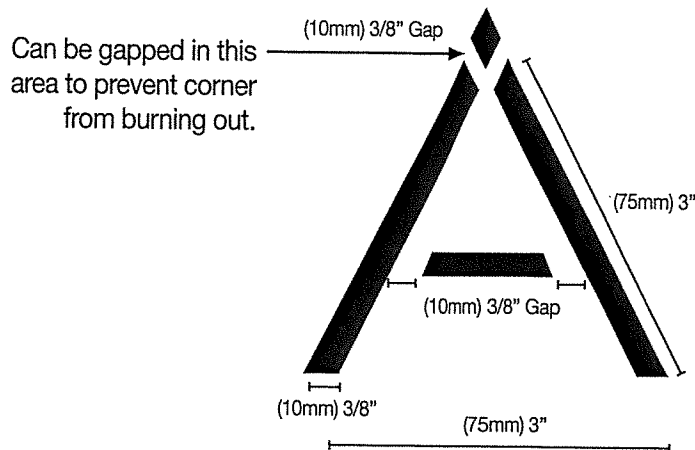
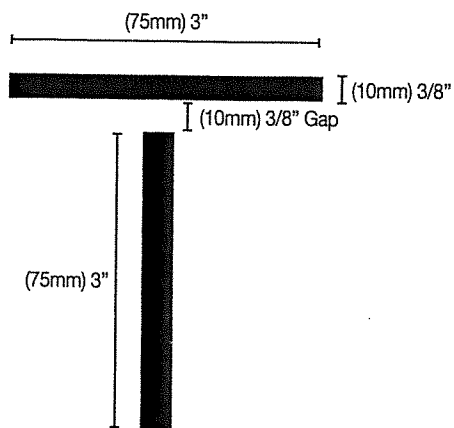
The face of the iron must not be less than 3/8" (10 mm) in width and not less than 3" (75 mm) in height and 2" (50 mm) wide. The space between characters must be no less than 1" (25 mm).

Horses

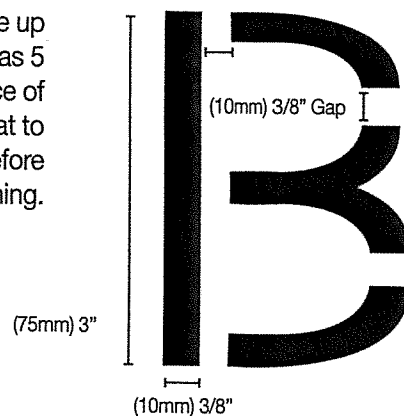
The face of the iron must not be less than 1/8" (3 mm) in width and not less than 2" (50 mm) in height and 1.5" (38 mm) wide. The space between characters must be no less than 3/4" (18.75 mm).

Construction of Brands

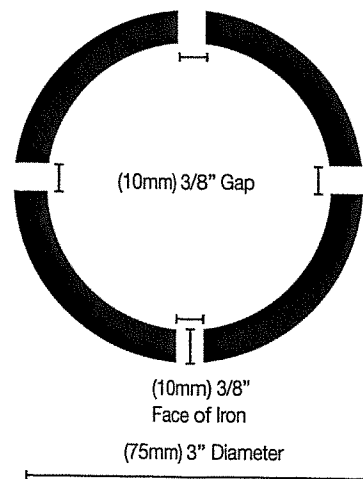
Size and Dimensions



This B iron is made up in one piece, but has 5 gaps cut into the face of it to allow extra heat to escape, and therefore eliminating blotching.



The letter O has had gaps cut into it to allow heat to escape. It is recommended that branding irons of this nature be made larger than irons consisting of straight lines, because it will help to eliminate blotching and poor branding.



Below are some brands and their descriptions that we use. It will help you become familiar with the reading of brands if you go over it.

