

# Legal identification marks

under the Animal Identification Act, 2002  
(Act No. 6 of 2002)

- ◆ All livestock have the opportunity to get a registered identification mark.
- ◆ The identification mark shows to whom the animal belongs.
- ◆ A legal identification mark is very useful: if lost or stolen animals are found, it will be possible to trace the owner.



agriculture

Department:  
Agriculture  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

## **HOW TO REGISTER AN IDENTIFICATION MARK**

- ◆ You must fill in an application form.
- ◆ The form is obtainable from extension officers, magistrates' offices, stock-theft units of the South African Police Service or from the Registrar of Animal Identification in Pretoria.
- ◆ There is an application fee to be paid. You only have to pay once.
- ◆ Get a postal order/revenue stamp at the post office for the correct amount and mail it together with the application form.
- ◆ Address the envelope to: The Registrar of Animal Identification, Private Bag X138, Pretoria 0001, or take the form to the Delpen Building, at the corner of Annie Botha Avenue and Union Street, Riviera, Pretoria.

## **RULES FOR REGISTERING AN IDENTIFICATION MARK**

- ◆ All identification marks must be registered. This means that your mark is put on an official list and no one else may use it.
- ◆ You may not put an identification mark on your animals if you have not registered the identification mark.
- ◆ You may use the same mark for your small and large stock.
- ◆ No one may brand your animals without your permission.
- ◆ If you buy animals or get them as a gift, you must put an identification mark on them within 2 weeks.
- ◆ Animals that you sell should also have your identification mark.

## **WAYS OF IDENTIFYING YOUR ANIMALS**

Permanent identification marks can be put on animals by means of hot iron branding, freeze branding or tattooing.

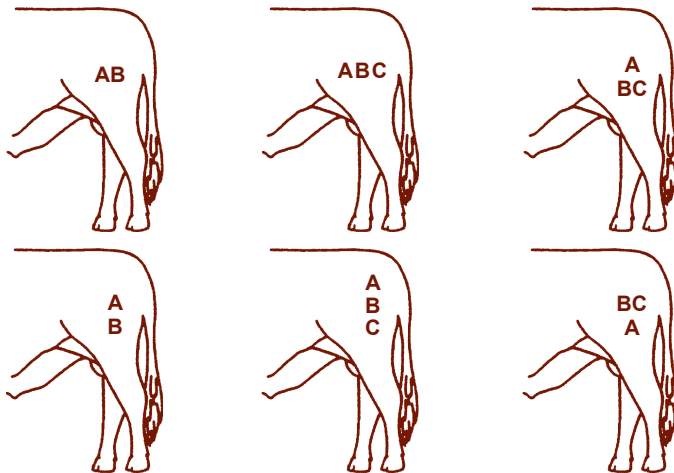
**Hot iron branding:** The stock owner burns a mark on the skin of his animals with a hot iron.

**Freeze branding:** A landmark can also be put on the animals by way of freeze-branding. Freeze branding is done by means of dry ice and alcohol.

**Tattoo mark:** Tattoo pliers and ink are used to mark animals.

## WHAT DOES AN IDENTIFICATION MARK LOOK LIKE?

- ◆ An identification mark consists of not more than 3 letters of the alphabet or symbols (characters).
- ◆ A three-letter mark can be used in four different ways (see picture).
- ◆ Two-letter marks can be used in two different ways (see picture).
- ◆ The characters may not touch one another.
- ◆ The same mark may be used on cattle or small stock.



## Cattle (large stock)

- ◆ Cattle are marked with a hot iron or by freeze branding.
- ◆ A character of an identification mark on cattle may not be smaller than 40 mm or bigger than 100 mm (high or wide).
- ◆ The mark may have 1, 2, or 3 characters.
- ◆ The characters may not be closer than 20 mm from each other.
- ◆ You may put the characters next to each other, below each other or in the form of a triangle, or an upsidedown triangle.



## Sheep, goats (small stock) and pigs

- ◆ Sheep, goats and pigs are tattooed.
- ◆ The characters of a tattoo may not be bigger than 20 mm (high or wide).
- ◆ The mark may have 1, 2, or 3 characters.
- ◆ You must put the characters next to each other.

## Ostriches

- ◆ Depending on their age, ostriches are branded or tattooed on the leg.
- ◆ No ostriches under 6 months may be branded with a hot iron.
- ◆ Ostriches younger than 6 months may be tattooed.
- ◆ The characters of a brand may not be bigger than 25 mm (wide or high).
- ◆ The characters of a tattoo may not be bigger than 20 mm (wide or high).
- ◆ The brand or tattoo may only have 1 or 2 characters.
- ◆ You must put the characters 6 mm from each other.

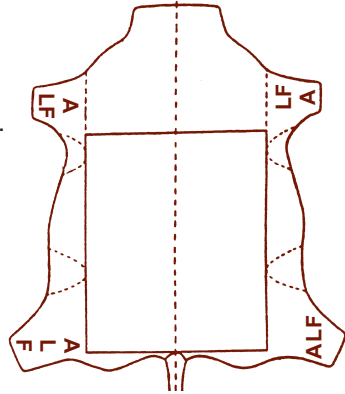


- ◆ You may put the characters below each other.
- ◆ The tattoo marks must be put next to each other.

## ON WHAT PART OF THE ANIMAL MAY YOU PUT THE IDENTIFICATION MARK?

### Cattle

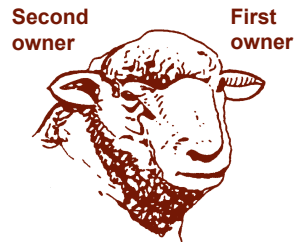
- ◆ On any visible area, except the neck.
- ◆ Put the identification mark as low as possible on the body but where it can be seen easily.
- ◆ Do not put the mark on the feet.
- ◆ See picture. Put the brand at any place outside the square.
- ◆ It is suggested that the first owner can put the mark on the left hind leg, the second owner can put it on the left shoulder, the third owner on the right hind leg and the fourth on the right shoulder.
- ◆ Remember, you can lose money on hides if you put a mark in valuable areas.



### Sheep, goats and pigs

See picture.

The **first owner** can put the tattoo in the left ear, the **second owner** in the right ear.



### Ostriches

Tattoo ostriches younger than 6 months underneath the left wing.

Brand ostriches older than 6 months on the thighs.

The **first owner** can put the brand on the outer side of the left thigh. The **second owner** can put it on the outer side of the right thigh.

## MARKING WITH A HOT IRON

### *Step 1*

Use a separate iron for each character of the mark.  
It is easier this way.

### *Step 2*

Get everything ready before you start putting on marks.

### *Step 3*

Get someone to help you. The assistant must bring the animal closer and hold it firmly. If you have a crush pen branding will be easier.

### *Step 4*

Heat the iron well. When the iron becomes whitish, it is hot enough. You may test the iron on a piece of wood to see if it is hot enough.

### *Step 5*

Knee-halter the animals so that they do not kick you.

### *Step 6*

Take the first iron and put it against the animal's skin for 3 counts. **Do not press.** Count 1, 2, 3 slowly. Take off the iron. Take the second iron and do the same. The same with the third. Now the mark is complete.

### *Step 7*

Spray some cold water onto the brand so that the animal's skin can cool down. You can also spray wound oil on the mark. Do not wipe it with a cloth and never rub manure on the mark.



## MARKING WITH A FREEZE BRANDING IRON

### **Equipment needed:**

- ◆ Coolant – dry ice in ethyl, methyl or isopropyl alcohol and liquid nitrogen.
- ◆ Isolated container for the coolant.
- ◆ Set of copper or high-quality bronze alloy branding irons.

- ◆ Set of clippers.
- ◆ 95 % ethyl or methyl alcohol.
- ◆ Gloves.

### *Step 1*

Get everything ready before you start branding.

### *Step 2*

Get someone to help you. The assistant must bring the animal closer and hold it firmly. If you have a crush-pen, branding will be easier.

### *Step 3*

Knee-halter the animals so that they do not kick you.

### *Step 4*

Shave off the hair on the spot to be branded.

### *Step 5*

Freeze the irons by putting them in liquid nitrogen or in spirits which has been chilled to  $-40^{\circ}\text{C}$  by means of dry ice.

### *Step 6*

When the irons stop giving off bubbles they are cold enough to brand letters onto the skin. Shake off the nitrogen or spirits, otherwise the flow-off will also leave a mark on the skin.

### *Step 7*

Press hard for the following exposure times:

Animals of 6 to 8 months – 20 to 25 seconds.

Animals of 9 to 18 months – 25 to 30 seconds.

Animals over 18 months – 30 to 35 seconds.

## **MARKING BY MEANS OF TATTOOING**

The third method of identification is the tattooing of animals by means of tattoo pliers and ink.

### *Step 1*

Get everything ready before you start tattooing.

**Step 2**

Get someone to help you. The helper must put the animal down and hold it firmly.

**Step 3**

Put the characters in the right order and position in the tattoo tongs.

**Step 4**

Apply the tattoo ink on the area to be branded (ears or oxters).

**Step 5**

Press the tongs until little holes on the skin appear.

**Step 6**

Rub the ink into the holes.

The tattooing process is complete.

If you want to know more about the identification of animals, you can ask at the nearest extension office, vet or stock-theft unit of the South African Police Services. You can also phone the Registrar of Animal Identification in Pretoria at telephone number (012) 319 6000, or you can write to:

The Registrar of Animal Identification  
Private Bag X138, Pretoria 0001

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