

# Branding Tips/ I.D. Numbers

Your I.D. number can be made up of any combinations of numbers; it is your choice. You must use a different number on each animal. For instance, some people would start with the number 1 either over or under the year. Examples I/7 or 7/I. Others would prefer the numbers in straight line. Examples 17 or 71. It is much easier to keep track of numbers if they are consecutive. For example, 1/7 on the first calf you brand, the second would be 2/7, etc. These numbers along with the holding brand must be on animals before you can register them with the International Texas Longhorn Association.

A properly applied, legally recorded brand is proof of ownership. It will increase the chances of recovering stray, missing or stolen livestock and will serve as a deterrent to theft as well. A good brand eliminates many markets and outlets where a rustler might dispose of an animal.

Brand laws vary from state to state, each individual needs to check with their local authorities on how to file for and record brands. Your brand is not legal unless properly recorded.

## A. Branding Irons

1. Branding irons can be constructed of iron, steel, stainless steel or copper. Over the past several years the use of an electric heading unit shaped into a particular design has become increasingly popular.
2. Branding irons for grown cattle should be 4-5 inches high and at least 3 inches wide with a 3/16 - 3/8-inch face. Calf irons should be 2-3 inches high with a 3/16 - 1/4-inch face. Handles can be made from 1/2 inch rod and should be at least 36 inches in length.
3. Sharp edges should be filed off.
4. Do not use thin or burned-up irons as they will cut deep into the hide and leave a thin sear, which will cover with hair.

## B. Heating the iron

1. Using either a bed of coals or bottled gas, the iron should be heated until it is gray in color. If it is black it will be too cold and won't burn deep enough. If it is bright cherry red it will burn too deep, possibly leaving a hard to heal sore and a blotched brand. The iron must be hot enough to remove the hair and the outer layer of skin.

## C. Applying the Brand

1. Normally, applying the iron 3-5 seconds will be sufficient to obtain a permanent brand. If the cattle to be branded are carrying extremely long hair, they should be clipped
2. Be sure to press firmly and rock the iron slightly to get a uniform brand.
3. Do not brand animals that are damp or wet as it will result in scalding rather than burning and in most cases a blotched, slow-healing sore.
4. Restrain the animal to be branded as securely as possible to prevent their moving and causing a blotched brand
5. Do not brand over an existing brand
6. There should be only one application of the iron. If it is necessary to retouch the brand, do so with extreme care to avoid blotching
7. A properly applied brand should be the color of saddle leather when the iron is removed.

**D. Care of the Irons**

1. Keep your irons free of carbon buildup caused by scale and burnt hair. A bucket of sand or a wire brush at the branding table will aid you in this chore.
2. When you are through branding, the irons should be cleaned and reshaped by using a file or a rasp and be stored. In a container of oil.

**E. Brand Design**

1. Your brand should be as simple as possible. Avoid intricate patterns, sharp corners, as a concentration of heat will cause the brand to bum out and blotch