

BRANDING IRON INSTRUCTIONS

CONVENTIONAL HOT IRONS

A good source to consider when having your iron built is either the local welding shop, blacksmith or inquire at your local feed store. You can provide the person making your iron with the drawing provided by this office showing the minimum size and shape requirements of your iron. Be sure that when you accept your finished iron that it is accurate, and do not accept one unless it is correct.

THE AVERAGE HEIGHT of letters and/or characters is 3" inches tall. Letters less than that size are not to be used on full grown cattle. A smaller 2 1/2" inch iron may be used for calves or horses ONLY! Be advised that it may not be cost effective to purchase two livestock irons, one for cattle the other for calves/horses.

SMALLER BRANDING IRONS cannot be approved, as they will not burn a clear and definite mark that can be readily seen. Also, there is a good chance that this type of iron will blotch.

STANDARD HIGH QUALITY IRON, about 1" inch or more wide and 1/2" inch beveled to 3/16" inch at the burn surface is still the most widely used material for the construction of branding irons. Although if properly braced, 1" inch by 1/8" inch is giving the best results with less blotch factor.

SPACES between letters or characters of a brand are generally 1" inch. This is so they will not appear connected once applied to stock. HORIZONTAL BARS preceding or following the brand must be 1 1/2" inches long or longer. A bar between two principal parts must be 1" full inch long or longer.

NOTCHES OR BREAKS are necessary on all irons (with the exception of some electric irons) where the iron joins or intersects. They are generally 1/4" inch wide and deep.

SECONDARY SYMBOLS may include: Quarter Circles, Channel Irons, Sunrise, Rafters, Wings, Hats, Steps, Caps, Longhorn, Lightning, Bars, Crowns, Slashes or Dots, which make similar brands different.

THE HANDLE should be long and straight with a large handhold to insure a firm grip. The top of the handle should be marked with "red" paint to indicate the direction of use.

TIPS ON BRANDING: When the iron is applied it should burn deep enough to remove hair and the outer layer of skin. When lifted the iron should leave the brand the color of saddle leather.

Don't let the iron get "red" hot. This starts a hair fire and usually will result in a poor brand. At proper heat, the iron is the color of ashes. Wood is the best fuel for a branding fire.

Don't use a "thin" or burned up iron. It will cut too deeply or make a thin scar that the hair will cover up. Keep the face of the iron smooth and free from rust or scale.

Don't try to brand a wet or damp animal. The brand will scald, leave a blotch, a bad sore, or "no" brand at all. If possible, the best method is to "clip" the hair first, then brand. This provides a much clearer brand. The oil in the hair may catch on fire and the brand will blotch. The use of sponge and ice cold water helps cool after.

Don't be in a hurry! The stock will wear the brand all its life. The objective is for the brand you apply to be its return address home should it be lost or stolen.

ELECTRIC IRONS

Electric irons are widely used with excellent results. These are factory made and thermostatically controlled. The cost is approximately between \$60.00 and \$90.00, and requires electricity at the branding chute. Many factory made stamp irons are now cast from copper or copper alloys. These have advantage of heating a little faster than a standard iron, but usually cost more.

FREEZE MARKER

In Washington, freeze marking can be used to "LEGALLY" show ownership rather than the hot iron technique.

ADVANTAGES include the fact that the brand is more legible, particularly from a distance since it turns the hair "white", and when properly applied leaves a narrow strip without hair. It is relatively painless, does not scab, and has no blotch factor.

DISADVANTAGES include extra care in application, requires close clipping, and the use of a refrigerant is necessary. This process takes more time and the branding marker must be made of copper, brass or bronze.