



CLAIM YOUR HERD

Registering a livestock brand in Wyoming

Just because you don't see many ranchers strapped with bandoleers and slinging pistols these days doesn't mean disputes over livestock are any less heated. If you find a rustler between you and your stock, a brand could certainly stand tall on your side.

Ranchers long ago recognized the need to identify their stock to prevent disputes and preserve friendships. Early Spanish ranchers brought branding with them from Europe (Hernando Cortes branded with a cross the cattle he shipped from Spain). But the origin goes back to ancient Egypt – paintings in tombs 4,000 years old show Egyptians branding cattle.

Branding stock in the early American West allowed owners to let their herds graze freely, knowing they could claim their stock at roundup. Though open grazing is uncommon today, brands are still a useful and recognizable part of Wyoming.

Even if you don't own cattle or horses, you can register brands to give your ranch identity. For instance, you may want to create a "family brand" or revive a brand that's no longer in use to claim a piece of the West.

Strict laws in Wyoming govern registration and inspection of brands, but obtaining one can be a simple process. It begins with completing a brand application. On it, you will need to indicate the shape of the brand and where on the animal it will be located.

Connie Hinesley, a brand recording analyst with the Wyoming Livestock Board, the body

responsible for registering brands in the state, recommends a brand have rounded lines and use open characters that won't blotch or blur. Brands should not be a single letter and should not contain dots. Hinesley recommends submitting three to five choices should your first preference be taken.

A registration fee of \$100 is due for the first species of animal on which you'll use the brand (and an additional \$50 for each additional species). Registration lasts for 10 years.

At one time in Wyoming, all brands were reregistered at once, but with 28,367 brands in the state (as of October 21, 2005), a change in practice is creating a staggered renewal system so that about 20 percent of brands will be renewed every two years. The registration fee will be prorated if your brand is designated to renew before the next 10-year period.

If not renewed, the brand will be considered abandoned and could be registered by someone else. A brand is considered property, so ownership can be transferred or sold (a transfer fee will apply).

The Wyoming Livestock Board publishes a book of brands registered in the state. A CD of the book is available for \$22. A hardcover version that is being updated will be available for about \$30.

To register a brand, contact the Wyoming Livestock Board, 2020 Carey Ave, 4th Floor, Cheyenne, WY 82002-0051. Phone (307) 777-7515. An application is downloadable from wlsb.state.wy.us under the Brand Unit link.

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