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## **Kansas Livestock Brands**

When writing a weekly news column, one needs to seek motivation from about any source. Fortunately, the Kansas Department of Agriculture's Division of Animal Health has provided inspiration this week through the excellent Animal Health Workshop held in Perry. Very timely topics including; Theileria, New World Screwworm and disease traceability were all excellent and things I've covered in news columns before, but a rather "old" subject ended my writer's block.

A livestock brand is a permanent, state-registered mark, applied with a hot iron or by freeze-branding, that identifies who owns an animal. Kansas has recorded brands since 1939, and today the Brands Program maintains a registry of more than 17,000 active brands. Registration with KDA is required before you brand any animal in Kansas, even though not a brand inspection state. It is illegal in Kansas to brand any animal before registering that brand with the Brands Office. A brand does not need to be registered to be used as a logo — but it must be registered before it's used on an animal.

A brand only works if it can be read and reported. A design that's too complex to identify, or that doesn't take well to branding, doesn't protect your livestock. Every registered brand must be distinguishable with reasonable certainty from every other brand recorded at that same body location. Locations include left and right side – shoulder, rib and hip. KDA maintains a searchable registry database of brands that can be found on their website.

Branding has marked ownership of Kansas livestock since the open-range era, moving from open-fire irons to electric irons to today's freeze-branding method — both hot and freeze methods are recognized under Kansas law. Brand inspection is not mandatory in Kansas. However, five contract inspectors are available statewide for a fee, and the same inspectors serve five Kansas livestock markets that contract with KDA for inspection services. Additionally, two livestock agent brand inspectors cover the state to assist local law enforcement with lost, stray, and stolen livestock cases across agencies.

The brand registration process in Kansas is easy to navigate. There is a non-refundable five-dollar application fee due with application. There is a registration fee of seventy-dollars, per location, that is good for five years from April 1 of the year registered. Before applying; search the Brand Database to check for conflicts, design the brand using the approvable character list, following the full brand guidelines. The design must differ in at least two ways from any other currently registered brand at the same location.

Brand design rules do not allow; single-letter or single character brands, more than four characters, slanting or tumbling letters/numbers, two-digit number brands or cursive letters or scrolled fonts. The following types of brands are discouraged: complex or intricate designs; letters, numbers or symbols enclosed in a closed shape; lowercase letters as these conflict visually with other characters; and broken bars due to too many variations which can cause confusion. For more information visit: <https://www.agriculture.ks.gov/divisions-programs/division-of-animal-health/brands-program>