

THOROUGHBRED BRANDS / IDENTIFICATION

Any thoroughbred foal born after 2003 needs to be identified by two methods prior to being accepted into the Australian Stud Book (ASB).

One method is via the implanting of a unique microchip into the nuchal ligament, midway in the left-hand side crest of the neck. This is done by a ASB approved veterinarian at the same time as an MBS (Microchip, Brand and Sample) form is completed. This form is part of the ASB Identification Kit. As a part of this process, a small sample of hair follicles is collected and sent away for DNA testing in order to verify the foal's parentage.

The second method of identifying thoroughbreds, used by the ASB, is freeze branding.

THE PROCESS

Prior to March 31st of their first year of life, all foals are required to be freeze branded. Imported horses who are going to race are also required to be freeze branded, imported horses who are going straight to stud are not required to be freeze branded.

The freeze branding process is a relatively simple and pain free one which can be performed by vets or professional horsemen/women who are trained and well experienced in the process. The near (left) and off (right) shoulders are clipped while the appropriate brands are chilled in liquid nitrogen. Immediately prior to applying the brand, a squirt of methylated spirits is applied to the clipped skin (methylated spirits helps with the transfer of the cold) and the cold metal brand is applied with moderate pressure for several seconds (the amount of time depends upon several factors).

After the brand is removed, an indentation of the brand remains for ten or so seconds, then disappears before a raised welt appears five or ten minutes later. The swelled pattern diffuses over the next five days, flaky skin appears in about a month before white hairs start to grow back two to three months after branding. The application of the right amount of cold is enough to destroy the pigment producing cells associated with hair follicles, but not the hair follicles themselves.

The brand that appears on the near side shoulder needs to be registered with the Australian Stud Book (ASB) brands register to an owner and allocated a brand index number. The owner of a brand can be an individual owner, breeder, stud, company, or syndicate. The brand that appears on the off side shoulder is a number on top of or over another number.

For example, 305 is the “drop number”, or, in this case it was the 305th foal born on this farm in that particular season. 9 represents the year of birth, so 2019, 2009 or 1999. We can tell whether a horse is 3, 13, 23 or 33 by looking at the teeth, but that’s a discussion for another time.

305
9

Prior to the ASB Identification Kit process, the ASB approved veterinarians had to complete much more arduous written descriptions of each yearling, which included a written description of each brand. Currently there is just under eleven thousand brands on the ASB register listed with an image, index number and written description of the brand. For less than forty dollars a year you can subscribe to the ASB and have access to the brands register. See below for some examples of brands and their descriptions.

If you have an unknown thoroughbred who you want to identify, the simplest way is to ask your friendly vet to scan the horse for his/her microchip number and enter this number into the “Find Horse” search on the ASB website. If you are in a hurry, subscribe to the ASB website and have a crack at doing a brand search to find the brand index number and then do a horse search using the drop number and year of birth.



	J T OVER LAZY 2	Widden Stud
	CROWN OVER RUNNING W	Woodlands Stud
	REVERSED E V P OVER SCROLL AND UNDER SCROLL	Emirates Park (Vic)
	T ROLLED T DOT	Wattle Brae Stud
	B OVER G	Blue Gum Farm
	LOWER CASE D LOWER CASE H CONJOINED	Mrs C Dever
	LOWER CASE TBF INSIDE ALMOND	Two Bays Farm
	CROSSED SWORDS	Miss T Josephs
	LS OVER TICKED ARC DOT	Lyndhurst Stud Farm
	BROKEN LAZY K UNDER VERTICAL BAR DOT	Lyndhurst Stud Farm
	S INSIDE C	Cambridge Stud
	GP DOT UNDER TICKED ARC	Glenlogan
	SC LAZY H	Swettenham Stud
	N OVER BAR	Newgate Operations
	STRAWBERRY	Strawberry Hill Stud
	NT UNDER WINGS	Goodwood Farm
	G LOWER CASE B CONJOINED	Grant Bloodstock
	CHINESE T SYMBOL	Think Big Stud
	ARABIC G ABOVE STAR INSIDE CIRCLE	Godolphin Australia
	GT CONJOINED REVERSE G	Highgrove Stud
	JOCKEY CAP OVER THREE CONJOINED DIAMONDS	Arrowfield Stud
	Q FERN CONJOINED OVER SCROLL DOT	Aquis Farm
	H DOT	Hutchins Thoroughbreds
	GA	Rosemont Stud
	G OVER H VERTICAL BAR	Mr G Harvey
	GP DOT UNDER TICKED ARC	Glenlogan Park
	REVERSE SL CONJOINED	Three Bridges Stud
	CACTUS INSIDE BROKEN CIRCLE CONJOINED	The Cactus Club