



# Identification - horses

by Beth Green

## Summary

People who have horses are required to be registered as owners of livestock and have a current property identification code (PIC) for the property/ies they keep their horses on.

Horses are required to be identified with either an approved identifier or be branded with a registered stock brand by six months of age in the south west or 18 months of age in pastoral areas of Western Australia or before being removed from the property, whichever occurs first.

Owner registration and stock identification is vital for rapid management of disease outbreaks.

## Stock to be identified

Identification of livestock is required by law under the Biosecurity and Agriculture Management (Identification and Movement of Stock and Apiaries) Regulations 2013\*. It assists owners by deterring theft, helping to recover stolen animals and in tracing disease.

Experience with the outbreak of equine influenza in 2007 demonstrated the importance of being able to identify the owners and location of all horses. Horses can also become infected with diseases that can be transferred to other species and humans.

\*The BAM (IMSA) regulations

## Owners of horses to be registered

People who own horses must become registered as owners of livestock, as do owners of any other species of stock. The one registration covers any number of horses and other stock that the person owns. Once registered, owners will be issued with their registered identifiers, such as stock brand and earmarks as required and a property identification code (PIC), which indicates the properties on which their horses are normally kept.

## Property identification code (PIC)

The PIC is used to identify the property on which the owner's horses are normally kept, whether they own the land or not. Details of the property are entered onto the form when registering as an owner of stock. This may be the horse owner's

property, an agistment property or centre or a friend's property. In these cases the owner of that property must sign the registration form to indicate their permission for the horse to be on their property.

Having your own PIC on a shared property will allow you to be notified should anything occur on that property that could affect your horse.

Short term movements to other properties — such as to a vet, an event, for breaking in or to a breeding centre — do not constitute where the horse normally is kept and so do not have to be listed on your registration form. These locations will need their own non-farming PIC to indicate that stock are present but do not belong to them.

## Identification methods

Horses must be identified with a registered stock brand and/or an approved identifier:

- in the south west land division by six months of age or before being removed from the property, whichever occurs first
- in the pastoral areas by 18 months of age or before being removed from the property, whichever occurs first.

**Registered identification** for horses is a freeze or fire brand on the horse's left shoulder:

- the brand should measure at least 100mm long and 30mm high
- experienced operators can be contracted to apply brands to horses.

**Approved identification** is an alternative identification system approved by the Registrar of Stock and Apiaries. This can include breed society identification systems and may include a microchip, an alternative brand or a tattoo. Members of these organisations are still required to be registered owners of stock, however they can use their society's approved identifier instead of their registered brand if they wish. Owners must be a member of that society and the ownership records for each horse kept current. The Approved identifiers factsheet and webpage explain the approval process and breed societies with approved identification.

### Important disclaimer

The Chief Executive Officer of the Department of Agriculture and Food and the State of Western Australia accept no liability whatsoever by reason of negligence or otherwise arising from use or release of this information or any part of it.

## Horses other than registered breeds

Horses that are not registered with any breed society or equine association can now also be identified with a microchip as an approved identifier instead of a registered stock brand. The details of the horse, microchip and owner are to be registered with one of the five national animal register databases. These details should be updated as ownership changes.

National animal registration databases:

- Australasian Animal Registry (AAR)
- Central Animal Records (CAR)
- Homesafe ID
- National Pet Register
- Petsafe.

In Western Australia, microchips must be implanted in horses by a vet. The contact details for the databases are available on the website or in the Approved identifiers factsheet.

## Existing brands or age marks

If you purchase a horse that is already branded, you do not have to re-brand it unless you wish to. You will need to have documents to show that you own the horse.

If owners wish to brand newly acquired stock, the registered brand must be applied immediately below the existing brand on the left shoulder. When an age mark is present, the registered brand must be applied immediately below it. If there is insufficient room, the brand must be applied to the right shoulder.

Should a horse be stolen, it can be difficult to reunite an unidentified animal with its owner.

## Exemptions from identification

Foals less than six months old that are removed from a property while accompanied by their mother do not require identification. Their mother must be correctly identified.

## Moving horses

Unlike other livestock species, a waybill is not required when moving horses. Waybills can be used if the owner wishes to keep a record of where their horses have been and when.

## Shows and other equestrian meetings

There are currently no legal requirements for organisers of shows and other meetings specifically for horses. It is expected that event managers will keep comprehensive details of all

attendees and their horses and exercise good biosecurity practices to both prevent disease spread and assist with traceability if required.

## Offences under the BAM (IMSA) regulations

The following are offences under the BAM (IMSA) regulations:

- possessing a horse that is not legally identified
- using another person's registered brand
- applying your brand to a horse on a different property to those registered to your PIC
- trading/moving animals that are not correctly identified.

**The penalty for a breach of the legislation may be up to \$5 000.**

## More information

For more information, contact the Brands office  
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- Livestock identification and movement
- Registering as an owner of livestock
- Approved identifiers
- Movement of stock in Western Australia
- Movement of stock into and out of Western Australia