

# HOW TO TAKE PHOTOS OF YOUR HORSE FOR IDENTIFICATION

Even though microchipping has become the gold standard of horse identification, the importance of being able to visually identify a horse through its freeze brands as well as its markings is still vital.

Not everyone has access to a microchip scanner and being able to quickly identify the correct horse through external brands and markings is what most of us still rely on.

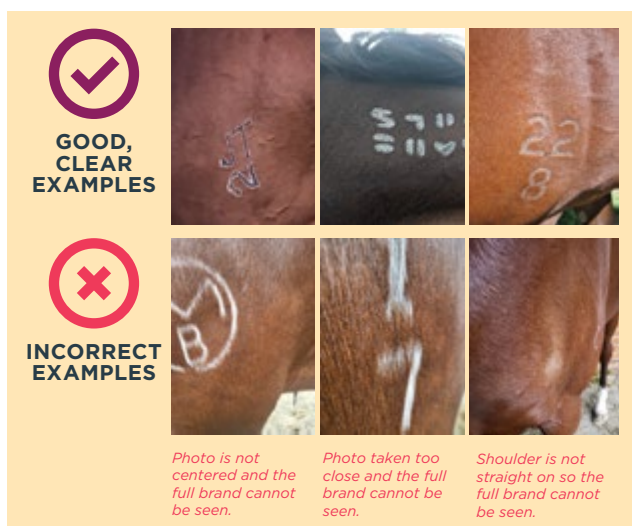
If you are filling out horse sport registration papers then you will need to be able to clearly explain and draw brands and markings (see our article on explaining brands to help) and in some cases provide clear photos.

## THOROUGHBREDS

A clear photo of each shoulder needs to be taken. The nearside (left side) brand will be a unique brand which indicates the stud or breeder of the horse, while the offside (right side) will be two (2) numbers which help us to identify and age the horse. The bottom number is the year the horse was born, while the top number indicates what order number that foal was when born i.e. was he/she the first or fifth foal born that year for that stud or breeder? For some big studs it is not uncommon to see that top number reach three digits.

## STANDBREDS

On standbreds there will be one brand on the offside neck of the horse. Just like thoroughbreds, the brand will tell us the year of foaling - but that's where the similarity ends! Instead of a stud brand, the symbols will indicate the Australian state of the birth and a registration number.



## FOR THE BEST RESULTS:

- » When taking the photo, a summer coat or clip is ideal. It is not uncommon for horse's brands to almost disappear or be impossible to decipher under a winter coat. If you need to take a photo in winter, then clipping the brand area is a good idea;
- » With standbreds make sure the mane is out of the way and not obscuring any part of the brand;
- » Have good light. This sounds obvious, but you'd be surprised what people send in;
- » Take a close-up photo. No further than a couple of metres away;
- » Ensure the brand is the main focus of the photo and taken straight on and not from a side angle as this can blur or change how the brand looks; and
- » Have the horse stand still. If the horse is not static then the brand can be blurred and too difficult to decipher.

## OTHER TIPS FOR TAKING IDENTIFYING PHOTOS

Clear photos of the horse's markings are also important, especially if the brand was badly done and inherently difficult to read.

A minimum of three (3) photos is best to show your horse's identifying markings - nearside, offside and front view.

- » Ensure there is good light and not dappled light;
- » Have the horse fill the frame and be the main focus of the photo;
- » Take a photo from nearside and offside that shows the horse's full body and legs down to the ground. Take the photo as a horizontal image;
- » The horse's legs should be slightly apart so all markings can be clearly seen in full;
- » Ensure the horse is clean so that any mud or debris is not mistaken as a marking;
- » For frontal photos, a vertical frame is best;
- » Again, the horse's legs need to be spaced enough so no markings are obscured;
- » If the horse has a long tail, keep it out of the way of any hind leg markings; and
- » Keep the horse's head straight so that facial markings are not skewed due to a misleading tilt.

**By following these tips you will make identifying your horse a pleasure for any industry body.**