



InfoPak



# Identification of animals

in terms of

**Animal Identification Act  
(Act No. 6 of 2002)**



—English—



**agriculture,  
forestry & fisheries**

Department:  
Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

**InfoPak**

---

# Identification of animals

in terms of

**Animal Identification Act  
(Act No. 6 of 2002)**

Pretoria, September 2010

---

**DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, FORESTRY AND FISHERIES**

---

2010 Revised, second print  
2008 Revised  
2007 First print

Design and layout by

Directorate Agricultural Information Services  
Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries

This InfoPak is obtainable from

Resource Centre, Directorate Agricultural Information Services  
Private Bag X144, Pretoria, 0001 South Africa

*or*

on the web at: [www.daff.gov.za](http://www.daff.gov.za)

---

# Contents

---

<b>Aim</b> .....	1
<b>Functions</b> .....	1
Introduction .....	2
1. Animal identification Act: (Act No. 6 of 2002) .....	2
2. Application of the Act (Section 2) .....	2
3. Advantages of legal marks .....	3
4. How to register an identification mark .....	3
5. What is an identification mark [section 4] .....	4
6. These do not include .....	4
7. Duties of owners [section 7] .....	5
<b>Legal implications</b> .....	6
1. Prohibited marking of animals [Section 15] .....	6
2. Offences .....	6
3. Marking of registered (stud) animals [Section 15(2)] .....	7
4. Alternative method of identification [Section 8 – Reg. 5] .....	8
5. Marking operators [Section 11] .....	8
<i>How to register</i> .....	8
<i>Marking operator courses</i> .....	9
<i>Register of marking operator records</i> .....	9
6. The animal identification system (AIS) .....	10

<b>Regulations</b> .....	11
1. Character sizes [Reg. 9] .....	11
2. Shape, pattern and composition [Reg. 10] .....	11
3. Age of animals at the time of marking [Reg. 11] .....	12
<i>Cattle</i> .....	12
<i>Small stock</i> .....	13
<i>Pigs</i> .....	13
<i>Ostriches</i> .....	13
<i>Equine</i> .....	13
4. Parts on which animals must be identified [Reg. 12] .....	14
<i>Cattle</i> .....	14
<i>Sheep, goats and pigs</i> .....	14
<i>Ostriches</i> .....	15
<b>Marking manual</b> .....	16
1. Hot iron branding, freeze branding and tattooing .....	16
<i>Marking with a hot iron</i> .....	16
<i>Marking with a freeze branding iron</i> .....	17
<i>Marking by means of tattooing</i> .....	19
<b>Conclusion</b> .....	21



---

## Aim

---

To manage the national register for Animal Identification (AID) marks that will act as a first line of defence against stock theft, enhance identification of property and support traceability.

---

## Functions

---

- ◆ Administering the Animal Identification Act.
- ◆ Manage the national register for animal identification marks as the animal identification system.
- ◆ Develop a policy on animal identification.
- ◆ Ensure equal access to service providers regarding animal identification.
- ◆ Contribute towards black economic empowerment and job creation by registering marking operators.

**The first line of defence against stock theft!**



---

# Introduction

---

## 1. ANIMAL IDENTIFICATION ACT (Act No. 6 of 2002)

- ◆ The Animal Identification Act, 2002 (Act No. 6 of 2002) replaced the old Livestock Brands Act, 1962 (Act No. 87 of 1962).

## 2. APPLICATION OF THE ACT (Section 2)

- ◆ The Act applies to the whole country.

**It is compulsory to mark all cattle, sheep and goats and pigs.**



### **3. ADVANTAGES OF LEGAL MARKS**

- ◆ Visible deterrent – stock thieves are more inclined to steal animals that are not marked.
- ◆ Positive identification.
- ◆ Positive proof of ownership.
- ◆ More effective policing.
- ◆ More effective recovery rate.
- ◆ Enable tracing.
- ◆ A legal identification mark is very useful – if stolen or lost animals are found, it will be possible to find the owner.

### **4. HOW TO REGISTER AN IDENTIFICATION MARK**

- ◆ All owners must apply for a registered identification mark.
- ◆ Get forms from the extension offices, magistrate's offices, stock theft units of the SAPS or from the Registrar of Animal Identification.
- ◆ There is a registration fee to be paid. It is a once off payment.
- ◆ Address the envelope to: The Registrar of Animal Identification, Private Bag X138, Pretoria, 0001.
- ◆ All identification marks must be registered.
- ◆ The registration is placed on the National Register of Animal Identification System (AIS).



## 5. WHAT IS AN IDENTIFICATION MARK? [Section 4]

- ◆ Mark prescribed by the Minister.
- ◆ Any registered mark made or placed on animals for any purpose whatsoever.

## 6. EXCLUSIONS

- ◆ A mark on the horn or hoof
- ◆ A mark made with paint
- ◆ Clasp, rivet or tag attached to the ear
- ◆ Notch or hole



## 7. DUTIES OF OWNERS [Section 7]

- ◆ All owners of cattle, sheep, goats and pigs must register an identification mark at the office of the registrar of animal identification.
- ◆ Each owner must mark his/her animals in the prescribed manner.
- ◆ All cattle, sheep, goats and pigs of which the identification mark have become indistinct or invisible, must be re-identified in accordance with the legal provisions.
- ◆ Any owner of an animal with an identification mark on it, who wants to sell, barter or give away the animal within 14 days after he or she became the owner of such animal, must provide the new owner with a document of identification.

*This means that **within 14 days** the animal **can** be disposed of with-out having being branded with the new owner's mark since it already has the previous owners mark on it and a document of identification has been issued.*



- ◆ An owner of an animal who wants to sell, barter or give away an animal after 14 days of becoming the owner of such animal, must mark the animal with his or her own mark before disposing of it. The owner must also provide to the new owner a document of identification. The new owner must keep the document of identification for a period of one year.

*This means that **after 14 days** the animal **cannot** be disposed of without having being branded with the new owner's mark and a document of identification.*

---

# Legal implications

---

## 1. PROHIBITED MARKING OF ANIMALS [Section 15]

No person may mark an animal with a:

- ◆ Mark which has not been registered.
- ◆ Registered identification mark without the authorization of the owner of such a mark.
- ◆ Registered identification mark otherwise than it has been prescribed.
- ◆ Mark which is registered in the name of another person who is not the owner of the animals.
- ◆ Mark that is not a prescribed mark for the group to which the animals belong.

## 2. OFFENCES

Any person who:

- ◆ Is a marking operator and fails to keep a register.
- ◆ Have any animals in his/her possession, which are marked in a manner other than in accordance with or permitted by the provisions of the Act.
- ◆ Alter, mutilate or erase the identification mark on an animal.
- ◆ Sells an animal on which an identification mark has been altered, mutilated or cancelled.
- ◆ Sells any animal of which the ear has been cut off without any lawful reason.

The sentence for these offences is a fine or imprisonment for a period not exceeding six months or both such fine and imprisonment.



### **3. MARKING OF REGISTERED (STUD) ANIMALS [Section 15(2)]**

- ◆ Registered animals are marked with marks allocated by the relevant Breeders Society.
- ◆ The Breeders' Society will prescribe the method of marking (branding or tattooing).
- ◆ Certificates of registration issued by the Breeders Society must accompany registered animals sold at public auctions.



## 4. ALTERNATIVE METHOD OF IDENTIFICATION [Section 8 - Reg. 5]

- ◆ It is now possible to apply to the Registrar for alternative ways of identifying animals.
- ◆ Stockowners must, however, take note that this will not apply to individual owners. Only requests for the marking of certain groups of animals or species will be considered.
- ◆ Should such a request be granted, it would be subjected to strict conditions in order to simplify the work of the Inspector and the SAPS.
- ◆ Provisions that would be implemented in such a case would include the application of a single mark (brand/tattoo) indicating that the animals are micro-chipped.
- ◆ It will also be a requirement that all those using this method have a scanner/reader available at all times.

## 5. MARKING OPERATORS [Section 11]

### How to register

- ◆ Complete a marking operator course.
- ◆ You must fill in an application form obtainable from the registrar.
- ◆ There is an application fee to be paid.
- ◆ Payment can be made by cheque or postal order.
- ◆ Address the envelope to:
  - The Registrar of Animal Identification
  - Private Bag X138
  - Pretoria (Tshwane)
  - 0001

## Marking operator courses

The Registrar will inform the applicant where to attend the prescribed course.

The course will include the following:

- ◆ The theory and technique of “hot iron” branding.
- ◆ The theory and technique of “freeze” branding.
- ◆ The theory and technique of tattooing.
- ◆ The theory and technique of restraining and marking animals; and the legislation regarding the welfare of animals.



*“Hot iron” branding*



*Tattooing*

## Register of marking operator records

- ◆ Name and address of the owner whose animals were marked.
- ◆ Date marked.
- ◆ Kind or specified breed marked.
- ◆ Number of animals marked.
- ◆ Method of identification.
- ◆ Date on which the owner's identification mark was registered.
- ◆ The registered identification mark of the owner.



*Neck clamp*



## 6. THE ANIMAL IDENTIFICATION SYSTEM (AIS)

- ◆ The animal identification system AIS is the national register of animal identification marks in South Africa.
- ◆ At this stage, it is only the South African Police Service that has access to the system.
- ◆ The AIS is a very user-friendly system that can be used by any official after a short period of training.



---

# Regulations

---

## 1. CHARACTER SIZES [Reg. 9]

- ◆ **Tattoo:** must not be larger than 20mm at the widest and highest part.
- ◆ **Brandmark:** must be between 40mm and 100mm at the widest and highest part.

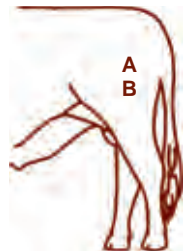
## 2. SHAPE, PATTERN AND COMPOSITION [Reg. 10]

- ◆ An identification mark can consist of one to three letters or symbols (characters).
- ◆ A three letter mark can be used in four different ways.

- ◆ A two letter mark can be used in two different ways.

- ◆ The characters may not touch one another.

- ◆ The same mark may be used on cattle or small stock.



### 3. AGE OF ANIMALS AT THE TIME OF MARKING [Reg. 11]

#### Cattle

- ◆ Must be marked by the age of six months.
- ◆ Can be tattooed from the age of one month – or
- ◆ Can be branded at the age of six months – and
- ◆ Must be branded by the age of the pair of permanent incisors (two-tooth stage).



## Small stock

- ◆ Must be tattooed at the age of one month.



## Pigs

- ◆ Must be tattooed at the age of one month.

## Ostriches

- ◆ Can be tattooed at the age of one month – and
- ◆ Can be branded at the age of six months.



## Equine

- ◆ Can be tattooed at the age of six months – and
- ◆ Can be branded by the age of twelve months.

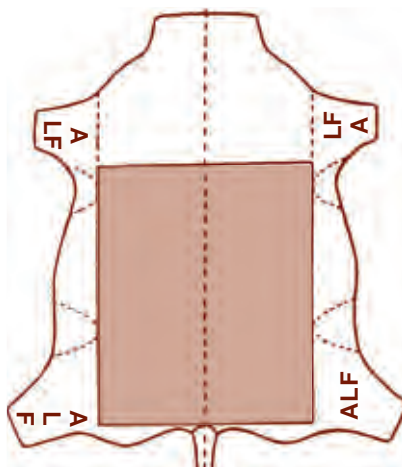




## 4. PARTS ON WHICH ANIMALS MUST BE IDENTIFIED [Reg. 12]

### Cattle

- ◆ **Tattooing:** In the left or right ear.
- ◆ **Branding:** On any clearly visible part, with the exception of the neck.
- ◆ Look at the picture. Put the brand at any place outside the square.
- ◆ The **first owner** can put the mark on the left hind leg, the **second owner** can put it on the left shoulder, the **third owner** can put it on the right hind leg and the **fourth owner** on the right shoulder.
- ◆ Remember, you can lose money on hides if you mark in the valuable areas.



### Sheep, goats and pigs

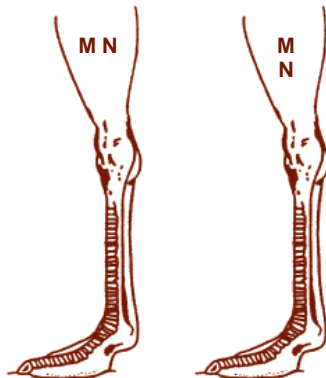
- ◆ The **first owner** can put the tattoo in the left ear, the **second owner** in the right ear.
- ◆ Pigs can also be marked in the left or right side of the neck or shoulder area by means of a “hogslapper”.



## Ostriches

- ◆ Tattoo ostriches younger than 6 months underneath the left wing.
- ◆ Brand ostriches older than 6 months on the thighs.
- ◆ The **first owner** can put the brand on the outer side of the left thigh. The **second owner** can put the brand on the outer side of the right thigh.
- ◆ Ostriches are branded or tattooed depending on their age.

- ◆ No ostriches under 6 months may be branded with a hot iron.
- ◆ Ostriches younger than 6 months may be tattooed.
- ◆ The characters of a brand may not be larger than 25 mm (wide or high).
- ◆ The characters of a tattoo may not be larger than 20 mm (wide or high).
- ◆ The brand or tattoo may only have 2 characters.
- ◆ You must put the characters 6 mm from each other.
- ◆ You may brand the characters next to or below each other.
- ◆ The tattoo marks may be put next to each other.





---

# Marking manual

---

## 1. HOT IRON BRANDING, FREEZE BRANDING AND TATTOOING

### Marking with a hot iron

#### Step 1

- ◆ Use a separate iron for each character of the mark. It is easier, but not compulsory.

#### Step 2

- ◆ Get everything ready before you start marking. Make sure that the **sequence** of the registered mark is **correct** according to the certificate of registration. This can be **tested on a piece of wood**.

#### Step 3

- ◆ Get someone to help you. The helper must bring the animal closer and hold it firmly. It will be easier if you have more than one helper.

#### Step 4

- ◆ Heat the iron well. When the iron becomes whitish, it is a sign that it is hot enough. You may test the iron on a piece of wood to see if it is hot enough.

#### Step 5

- ◆ Immobilise the animals with an immobiliser or knee halter so that they do not kick you. The immobilisation of the **voluntary muscles** prevents the animal from moving.





### Step 6

- ◆ Take the first iron and put it against the animal's skin for **3 counts**. Do not press. **Count 1,2,3 slowly**. Take off the iron. Take the second iron and do the same with the third. The mark is now complete; clean each iron after use with a steel brush to get rid of the burned skin and hair.

### Step 7

- ◆ Make use of **ice to cool down the wound** or spray some cold water onto the animal's skin to cool it down.
- ◆ You can also apply wound oil on the wound. Do not wipe it with a cloth and never rub manure on the wound.

## Marking with a freeze branding iron

### Equipment needed:

- ◆ Coolant – dry ice in ethyl, methyl or isopropyl alcohol and liquid nitrogen
- ◆ Isolated container for the coolant
- ◆ Set of copper or high-quality bronze alloy branding irons
- ◆ Set of clippers
- ◆ 95 % ethyl or methyl alcohol
- ◆ Gloves



### Step 1

- ◆ Get everything ready before you start branding.

### Step 2

- ◆ Get someone to help you. The helper must bring the animal closer and hold it firmly. If you have a crush-pen, branding will be easier.

### Step 3

- ◆ Immobilise the animals with an immobiliser or knee halter so that they do not kick you.

### Step 4

- ◆ Shave off the hair on the spot to be branded.

### Step 5

- ◆ Freeze the iron by putting it in liquid nitrogen or in spirits which has been chilled to  $-40\text{ }^{\circ}\text{C}$  by means of dry ice.

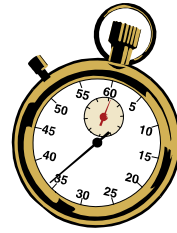
### Step 6

- ◆ When the irons stop giving off bubbles they are cold enough to brand letters onto the skin. Shake off the nitrogen or spirits; otherwise the flow-off will also leave a mark on the skin.

## Step 7

Press hard for the following **exposure times**:

- ◆ Animals 6 to 8 months: **20 to 25 seconds**
- ◆ Animals 9 to 18 months: **25 to 30 seconds**
- ◆ Animals over 18 months: **30 to 35 seconds.**



## Marking by means of tattooing

A third method of identification is the tattooing of animals.

- ◆ Tattoo pliers and ink are used to mark the animals.

### *Sheep, goats (small stock) and pigs*

- ◆ Sheep, goats and pigs are tattooed.
- ◆ The characters of a tattoo may **not be larger than 20mm** (high or wide).
- ◆ The mark may have 1,2 or 3 characters.
- ◆ You must put the characters next to each other.



### Step 1

- ◆ Get everything ready before you start tattooing.

### Step 2

- ◆ Get someone to help you. The helper must bring the animal closer and hold it firmly.

### Step 3

- ◆ Put the characters in the right order and position in the tattoo pliers – according to the certificate of registration.

### Step 4

- ◆ Clean the ears before applying the ink – ears have dirt and oil that will prevent the ink from filling the tattoo wholes made by the tattooing pliers. Apply the tattoo ink on the clean area to be tattooed.

### Step 5

- ◆ Press the tattooing pliers until holes appear on the skin.

### Step 6

- ◆ Rub the ink into holes. The tattooing process is complete.



---

## Conclusion

---

- ◆ *A permanent legal mark is the first line of defense against stock theft.*
- ◆ *The legislation in South Africa provides for an effective animal identification system.*
- ◆ *Hot iron brands for cattle and tattoos for small stock remain the most cost effective ways of marking these groups of animals.*