



Colorado Brand Inspection and 4-H Projects

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What is a brand?

A brand is a legal mark of ownership. In Colorado, each brand is unique and has a single owner, or is owned by a business like a farm or ranch. Livestock belonging to anyone or a business that owns a brand can be marked with that legal brand.

What is brand inspection?

A brand inspection is an “ownership check” on livestock. Brand inspections are required anytime there is to be a change in ownership. A brand inspector, who works for the Colorado Department of Agriculture, Brand Inspection Division, can be scheduled to come and do a brand inspection. The brand inspector will determine if the animals are owned by the person who says they own them. They inspect home raised livestock prior to sale and livestock purchased to resale. Brand inspectors will document the change in ownership.

When is a brand inspection required?

“Colorado law and regulations require that livestock (including cattle, calves, horses, mules, donkeys, burros and, when requested, sheep), whether or not they are branded, be inspected before (1) any change of ownership (whether by gift or sale), (2) transport over 75 miles within the state of Colorado (determined by the most direct driving route), (3) transport to a destination outside Colorado (regardless of the distance), (4) transport to sale, and (5) transport to slaughter.”
- Colorado Brand Inspection Division

Since a brand inspection is done anytime there is a change in ownership of livestock, this includes animals given or gifted to you that are owned by parents, or the family farm or ranch if your name is not listed as an owner of the brand. They are also required when animals are taken to harvest.

You may be asked to have a brand inspection to prove ownership of your animal(s) for events such as your county fair. They also need to be done if you are transporting livestock 75 miles or more away from your home, farm or ranch to go to a show and if transporting out of the state. A 4-H permit can also be issued for animals who travel across the state for livestock shows. The 4-H permit is valid for one year. If you are hauling horses to shows and rodeos a permanent travel permit can be issued for horses you own.

What animals are required to have a brand inspection?

Cattle and horses are the most common as they can easily be branded. Sheep and goats are usually not branded, but a brand inspection is required for any change of ownership.

Do I need to have my own brand?

No, you do not have to own a brand. You can own animals without owning a brand. You must be able to prove you own the animals you have using a bill of sale or receipt of purchase. If you buy animals and they are branded, the brand must be traceable to the brand owner.

Where can I learn more about brands or if I have questions about brand inspection?

For more information on brands, brand inspection, brand law and to find a brand inspector you can go to the Colorado Department of Agriculture, Brand Inspection Division website at <https://ag.colorado.gov/brands>.

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