

Colorado Brand Board/Brand Inspection Division, Colorado Department of Agriculture

Some History

Colorado's livestock industry formed what has become the Brand Inspection Division of the Colorado Department of Agriculture in 1865, when Colorado was a territory. Brands became a state agency in 1903 and became a division of the Department of Agriculture in the 1970s. The Division is governed both by the State Board of Stock Inspection Commissioners (Brand Board), a type 1 board whose five members are appointed by the Governor to four-year terms, and by the Department of Agriculture. The Brand Board members represent specific parts of the livestock industry - confinement cattle industry (two members), non-confinement cattle industry (two members, and equine industry (one member).

The Division is an enterprise for purposes of the state constitution and is 100% cash funded by the livestock industry. The Division receives no funding from the state or general fund.

Mission/Primary Responsibilities

The Division's mission is to protect Colorado's livestock industry from loss by theft, straying or illegal butchering. (For purposes of Colorado's livestock laws, "livestock" is defined as including cattle, calves, horses, mules, donkeys/burros, and sheep.) In fulfilling that mission, the Division's primary responsibilities are to:

1. Deter the theft of livestock, return stolen or strayed livestock, and investigate reports of both;
2. Inspect livestock and verify ownership before (i) any change of ownership, whether by sale or gift, (ii) transport over 75 miles within Colorado, (iii) transport to a location outside Colorado, (iv) transport to sale, and (v) transport to slaughter;
3. Inspect and license public livestock markets (28) and inspect livestock consignments before sale to verify ownership;
4. License certified feedlots (21) and administer the certified feedlot program;
5. License and inspect alternative livestock (elk and fallow deer) and alternative livestock facilities (50); and
6. Research, record and administer Colorado's approximately 30,000 registered livestock brands.

Purposes of the Division's Work

The inspection and related activities of the Division serve several important purposes, including:

- Deterring theft
- Facilitating commerce
- Helping protect producers and lenders
- Creating accurate livestock movement records that are critical during disease outbreaks

Brands and Branding in Colorado

Brands are livestock's "return address". Branding is not required in Colorado, but the vast majority of livestock owners, particularly cattlemen/women, do brand their animals.

For purposes of Colorado livestock statutes, a livestock brand is defined as a permanent mark on the hide of an animal, which brand is registered with the Brands Division as a Colorado livestock brand. Tattoos, ear tags, microchips, etc., while useful, are not recognized as brands.

Livestock brands are treated at law as personal property and are recorded in brand deed books and conveyed/transferred by deed.

In Colorado, a brand can be placed anywhere on the animal.

There are currently approximately 30,000+ registered Colorado livestock brands.

Nature of the Job

The Division is in the ownership business – i.e., its principal job is to verify livestock ownership.

Summary Information About the Division

- There are approximately 68 brand inspectors, supervisors and staff serving in 10 supervisory districts throughout Colorado's 104,000 square mile area.
- In 2021, brand inspectors traveled over 1.1 million miles inspecting 4.6 million head of livestock and handling 3,581 strays.
- In 2021, brand inspectors held 64,226 head of livestock pending satisfactory proof of ownership.
- The Division administers all of Colorado's approximately 30,000+ registered livestock brands.

Who Are the Brand Inspectors?

- They range in age from 20s to 70s.
- They are statutory peace officers.
- To be hired, they must have:

- Experience physically working with livestock in a variety of settings, such as sale barns, drives, rounds-ups, sorting and penning, etc.
 - The ability to read livestock brands
 - Good basic math skills
 - Good oral and written communication skills
 - Basic computer and cell phone skills
 - Good interpersonal skills
- They are members of the state personnel system.
 - They often remain in the same inspection district for many years.

Some Basic Operating Statistics

	<u># Head Inspected</u>	<u># Estrays</u>	<u># Holds</u>
FY 2021	4,620,039	3,581	64,226
FY 2020	4,520,034	15,798	64,951
FY 2019	4,541,887	2,583	67,244

Missing/Stolen Livestock

- Livestock owners are encouraged to file a missing/stolen report with their local brand inspector immediately upon noticing that livestock are missing.
- In 2021, 52 reports were filed involving 163 head
- In 2020, 65 reports were filed involving 326 head
- In 2019, 90 reports were filed involving 420 head

Coordination with Law Enforcement Agencies/Neighboring States

- Colorado brand inspectors work closely with state and local law enforcement agencies:
 - Train state troopers and sheriff's deputies in livestock laws, brand recognition
 - Part of the Colorado State Patrol Academy curriculum
 - Speak at law enforcement and district attorney gatherings and meetings
 - Assist in prosecutions
- Missing/stolen reports are widely disseminated to state and local law enforcement and regulatory agencies, sale barns, trade associations, Colorado brand inspectors, and brand inspectors in brand states. The purpose of the widespread dissemination is to get as many eyes on the problem as possible as quickly as possible.

- The Division is a member of the Western States Livestock Rural Enforcement Association (formerly Western States Livestock Investigation Association), and the International Livestock Identification Association (ILIA). The members of both organizations work closely together and share information about missing and stolen livestock.

Christopher Whitney
Brand Commissioner
May 2022