



April
2014



News from The Association of the Foundation Andalusian Horse
Guardian of the Timeless Iberian Horses



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Photo: Al Lemieux

Methods of Equine Permanent Identification Part 2

What Is... Freeze Branding?

Article courtesy of [Cowboy Way.com](http://CowboyWay.com)

Freeze branding is the process of using a branding iron to freeze a mark on the hide of an animal. Freeze branding uses extreme cold to kill the cells in the animal's skin that produce pigmentation, or color. Therefore, a freeze branded animal will have white hair where the freeze branding iron touched the skin. Freeze branding a horse (or other animal) is permanent, and is done for identification purposes.

We have a related page on this site showing photos of the freeze branding process on horses. You can see it here: [Freeze Branding Horses](#).

Highlights

Freeze Branding For Your Horse?

A Matter of Concern, Did You Know?

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The Advantages Of Freeze Branding

On dark colored animals freeze brands are extremely visible, far more so than "hot" brands. (A hot brand is made by applying a hot branding iron to an animal's hide so that all hair growth is stopped.)

The white hairs of a freeze brand stand out in sharp contrast to the darker hairs surrounding the brand, making a freeze brand extremely noticeable both to people who are familiar with livestock and to those who are not. Simply put, many more people are likely to notice a freeze brand than a hot brand, and for this reason alone many people consider a freeze brand a superior choice for identifying horses, cattle, and other animals. This identification works not only as a theft deterrent, but has also helped animals get returned to their rightful owners after they have accidentally gotten loose or after natural disasters.



Photo: [L&H Branding Irons](#)

Another distinct advantage of freeze branding is that a freeze brand remains clearly visible and easy to read even in wintertime, when many hot brands (which are not as easily seen as a freeze brand at any time of year) are made nearly illegible by a long winter hair coat. Lastly, freeze branding has the distinct advantage of being painless or nearly painless to the animal during the branding process.

Freeze Branding Horses: What If I Have A White, Gray, Or Light-Colored Horse?

The white hairs produced by a freeze brand are not all that helpful on a horse that is white, gray, or some other light color. There simply isn't enough contrast between the white hairs of the freeze brand and the surrounding light colored hairs to make the freeze brand stand out. In this situation horse owners will still commonly freeze brand a horse, but they will apply the iron to the horse's skin for a longer time period than usual, intentionally stopping future hair growth. The result is a brand that looks similar to a hot brand but that is often clearer and more easily read, and that was also more pain-free to apply.



Photo: [DeJong Farms](#)

At right: A gray horse with a brand that looks like it was put on with a hot branding iron. However, it is actually a freeze brand where the branding iron was intentionally applied to the skin long enough to stop all hair growth.

How Is Freeze Branding Done?

As we have said, a freeze brand is the result of applying a very cold branding iron to the hide of an animal. The three most common coolants used to make a freeze branding iron very cold are: 1) A combination of dry ice and 99% alcohol, or 2) A combination of dry ice and acetone, or 3) Liquid nitrogen. A branding iron made specifically for freeze branding is made of different metal(s) than a "hot" branding iron so that it will retain the cold from the coolant more efficiently.

A horse (or any animal) that is going to have a freeze brand applied will need to have the hair shaved off of the branding site. Hair is an excellent insulator and needs to be removed so that the extreme cold of the freeze branding iron can be applied directly to the skin. After the area is shaved, the freeze branding iron is submerged into the coolant. Immediately before the freeze branding iron is ready to be applied the animal's skin is soaked with a generous amount of 99% alcohol, then the freeze branding iron is removed from the coolant and held onto the skin with firm pressure for several seconds. The exact amount of time will vary according to the kind of animal, its age, the type of metal the branding iron is made of, the type of coolant being used, and other factors.

Approximately three months after being freeze branded, the hair should grow back in at the branding

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site a nice, bright white. To watch the freeze branding procedure [click here](#)

Brand Design Tips

When designing your brand, try to keep any letters and symbols you are using as open as possible. For example, the letters "H" and "L" are far more open than letters like "B" and "R" with their small, enclosed areas. The more open a symbol or letter is the more likely it is the brand will show up clearly and be easily readable. Avoiding small, enclosed areas with a freeze brand design is not as important as when designing a hot brand, however, as freeze brands are more tolerant of small areas. When designing your freeze brand become a keen observer of other people's freeze brands to see what did and did not turn out clearly, and ask for advice from people experienced with applying freeze brands.

In the next newsletter we will discuss other forms of permanent identification, loss or theft of your horse, what may happen and how a form of permanent identification maybe be a lifesaver!

A Matter of Concern

Are your Andalusians going to kill buyers?



We normally like to give you upbeat, educational or funny articles, but there is something that we feel an urgent need to tell you about that is for many reasons something we should all be concerned with and be working together to solve. That is the growing problem of "supposed" Andalusian or part Andalusian horses that are being passed through sale barns, purchased by kill buyers, with some being rescued and placed with new owners.

This is something that should be near and dear to all of our hearts.

For many reasons this is an important subject and one that we all should think about and take action on.

Lately we have seen many horses winding up in kill buyer pens, horses of all types and breeds, although attempts are being made to rescue some of them and place them in good homes. This is not only very sad but it becomes even worse when the possibility exists that these horses are Andalusians or partbred Andalusians.

This needs to be addressed and quickly!

We all know how noble, kind and gentle our horses are. We know also how sensitive and intelligent they are and we can only imagine how they might be treated along this route and

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how their intelligent minds will compute what is happening to them.

be



Both of these horses were listed as part Andalusian - do you think they are?

This is a problem because every horse that is “claimed” to be Andalusian or Partbred in this situation and is advertised as such, devalues the breed and hurts sales for our breeders and owners. Perception is everything! If people perceive that the breed is so plentiful and devalued that you can get them in kill pens for cheap it hurts us all with sales of our own horses.

It also hurts the reputation of the breed if these horses are passed on with the title “Andalusian”, people think that’s what they have because that’s what they were told and then the horses turn out to be inferior to the Andalusian’s qualities. That’s a bad representation of the breed and certainly would hurt future sales for all of us.

We have been monitoring this situation and have looked at a number of these horses. In most cases they have no Andalusian characteristics. Many are said to be just because they are grey, although a few have some possible characteristics and could be part Andalusian. We have also DNA’d a few of these horses to see if we can find an Andalusian parent, and none so far have had an Andalusian parent that we could verify.

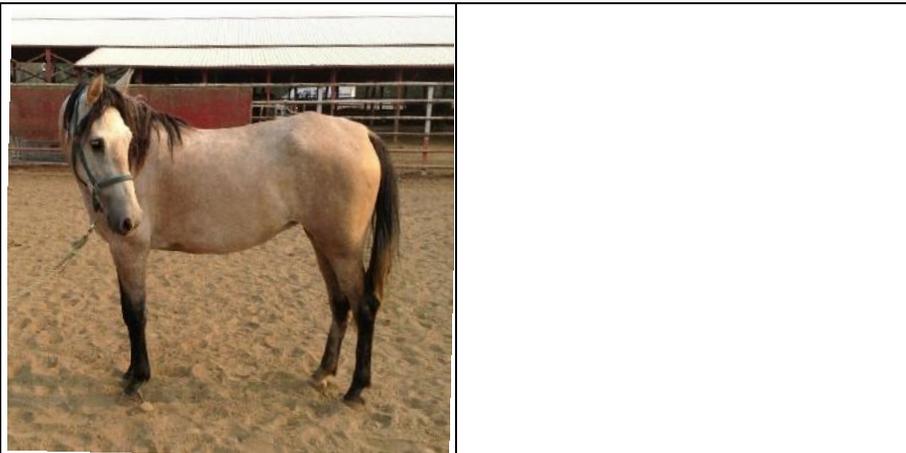
We have spoken to several people at sale barns and rescues in an attempt to come up with a solution, everyone has been very cooperative.

We also make every attempt to register any horse that does prove to be of Andalusian blood by helping people take the steps needed to complete the process.

Some of the horses have supposedly been called Andalusian by the person bringing them to the sales. We have asked the people at the locations the horses are coming in, if there is any way to at least ask the seller for the name of an Andalusian parent so that we could take it from there. It’s a difficult task for them to implement but it is possible that there are things we could do that would help them.

There have also been some disturbing reports about breeders who are producing large numbers of foals in what was called by one observer “puppy mills only with horses”. Obviously this will add to the problem and is very disturbing.





[How about these, Andalusian or not?](#)

This is where you all come in. You are all affected by this! We need your help! We need people who are willing to give a little of their time to contact sale barns, kill buyers, breeders, etc... and talk with them about what they could do. We need people who are in the areas to go and talk to the people there and put up posters at the sale locations asking people to leave information on the horses when they drop them off.

We need your ideas! There are a lot of good minds out there. Collectively we should be able to come up with some great ideas as to how we can help determine if they really are Andalusians or partbreds and if so how to help them or how to stop the use of that name if they are not.

We want to commend and say thank you to ALL of the people or rescues who go in and get horses from the kill pens and try to give them a second chance no matter what kind of horse they are. Their work in rescuing ANY horse is an important thing, and we don't mean to slight any effort to get ANY rescued horse into a good home regardless of breed. These people are all angels! It has to be a heartbreaking job to go and take some and leave some.

It is especially important to us as Andalusian breeders and owners, though, to protect our horses, our breed and our ability to market our horses, especially now.

Please, if you care about this breed and these horses, think about solutions or at least some things that would help and contact us with your ideas. Talk to fellow breeders and owners about producing horses that may wind up on the road to slaughter. Tell them to think hard and educate them before they produce another foal because they probably don't even realize that this is happening to some of them.

If you have some time to spare to make some calls or visits to sale barns, contact us. Get some information from us and do it! It is easy and doesn't take a lot of time just to talk to a couple of people.

If we could get a network of individuals in a widespread area that would be willing to go and put up information at sale barns in their area we could help some horses. That could simply be a poster saying that if you have any information on the horses pedigree please leave it in the office. We will design and get you a document to print.

In the meantime, if you or someone you know gets into a situation where the horses have to go and they are Andalusians or partbreds, tell us and let someone at least try to help find them better options before taking them to a sale barn where they will go on to slaughter if no one happens to rescue them.

Be aware that this IS happening! Be aware that few are rescued! There are many more going to slaughter than are being rescued!

The solution starts with you. Please be responsible! Consider carefully your reasons to produce another foal and your ability to provide a secure future for that horse. If you do decide to breed your mare or mares, be as responsible as you can. Always get your horses registered and trained but if the worst happens and you have to turn a horse into a sale barn, please send a copy of the papers or name of sire and/or dam information and your contact information with it! Then whoever winds up with the horse can contact you for the real hardcopy of the papers, so the real document isn't lost in the process.

There is no shame in having to give up a horse, and it is happening to a lot of people these days. You do not need to feel bad, just make sure you are doing the best you can for the horse if it comes to that. Do your part to help the horse and those that are trying to rescue the horse get it into a good home!

We all need to do our part and YOUR help is needed now!

THANK YOU for any help or ideas you may have to offer!!

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Sean Davies

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