

"Freeze Branding 101"

Article Courtesy of Plottguy

First and foremost, get yourself a bronze iron built specifically for freeze branding. I get mine here: <http://www.lhbrandingirons.com/pg/freeze.asp>.

I use a 2" capital A, and it cost me about \$41.00 (including shipping).



Next you'll need to buy two or three bottles of anhydrous alcohol. Anhydrous simply means almost no water content. Your bottle may say Isopropyl alcohol 99% - same thing. DON'T try to use rubbing alcohol; the water content is too high. If you cannot get anhydrous alcohol get a quart of acetone from the hardware store. I've used it, too, but I prefer the anhydrous alcohol. Either way, you'll be about five or six bucks into a quart of anhydrous alcohol or acetone.



The last thing you'll need is dry ice. I get it for .99 cents a lb. at the grocery store, and you'll need a three or four pound chunk of it. Take your ice chest with you to the store when you buy your dry ice, and don't buy it until the day you are going to brand.

You now have enough dry ice and alcohol to brand six or eight dogs.

Needless to say, you'll need a dry pair of gloves or tongs to handle the dry ice since it's temperature is about -71 degrees farenheit. I use a metal can that had V8 juice in it for my dry ice/alcohol mixture container. It's just about the right size, and if you can't find the big cans of V8, I also like to use a metal 3 lb. coffee can. Any big metal can like that will work just fine.



Break your ice into golf ball to apple size chunks with your hammer and drop about 1 - 1 1/2 lbs. of dry ice in the can. Add about 1 1/2 quarts of alcohol to the dry ice. It'll come to a rolling boil very quickly.



Put your iron in the mixture and let it sit for 20 - 30 minutes to drop to the desired temperature. You'll know it's getting cold enough because hoar frost will develop on the handle above the can. The colder the better, so the bigger the hoar frost gets the better. Be patient and let it get cold enough so your brand looks good when it's all said and done.



Clean clipped ribs and hips will need 25 - 35 seconds. Thin ears will need about 35 seconds, and thick ears will need around 45 seconds of branding time.

You'll need at least two people, and three is even better. One person must brand, while the other two hold the dog. Sometimes you need one guy to hold the front end of the dog while the second person holds the dog's back legs tight. Just depends on the dog. When we branded my Brandy dog, she curled up in my lap and acted like she was getting a relaxing massage. The dog pictured here thrashed around like a Marlin out of

water and peed all over my leg. I don't think the branding hurt so much as she thought she was getting beat up by three people, and I'm here to tell ya, she wasn't going down without a fight LOL!!!

*** You animal huggers can already quit your whining about how much it must hurt, and that's why they struggle when they are being branded, and all of that whiny baby garbage. If you were going to PM me about what an a\$\$ I am to do that to a dog, and it ought to be done to me, save it. I'm telling you from experience that it don't hurt. I wear the same iron as my dogs - I belong to them as much as they belong to me. They'd give their life for me; to return the favor is the least I could do.***

Back to the business at hand. As far as location of the brand goes, I brand both ears, and I do not clip the ear hair before I do. If you are branding ribs or hips clip the hair first. Soak the area to be branded with the alcohol (another reason I prefer alcohol over acetone).



In the case of an ear, lay it on a towel that is on a flat, sturdy surface.



The iron must be pressed very firmly to the animal, and must be gently rocked back and forth, and side to side while branding. Don't try to push the iron through the dog, just keep firm and steady pressure, and keep an eye on the time, or better yet, have another person time the branding. I lay my watch next to us so any one of us can watch the second hand.



You'll know when it's done good enough because there will be a hard as plastic, perfect imprint of your iron on the animals hide as soon as you lift the iron away from your dog. I failed you by not getting a picture of that, but my dog though she was in Gitmo prison and that we were CIA agents interrogating her, so I let her go outside and get her wits back about her as soon as we were done with both ears.

If you lift your iron away from the dog and that imprint of your iron has not completely formed, you need a little more time. Carefully put the iron back in the EXACT same spot and press and rock for about 10 more seconds, and then check it again.

If you are branding both ears as I do, or doing multiple dogs with one iron, put the iron back in the dry ice/alcohol mixture between brandings, and wait until the frost climbs the handle before you use the iron again.

In a couple of weeks the hair will fall out of the branded area. It will immediately start growing back white as snow. It can take a couple of months for the branded area to appear to be branded, so don't get impatient and rebrand the dog. Give it time to develop, and sooner or later it will be completely regrown, like Brandy's.



DO's AND DONT'S

I've hot branded hundreds of beef calves, so I had a pretty fair idea how to stamp an iron on a critter. Freeze branding is different, though, so I learned to freeze brand by trial and error. Here's your opportunity to learn from my mistakes and make sure that your dogs look good right from the get go.

#1 - If you need to touch up a brand a couple months later when it's obvious that you missed a spot, use the exact same iron, and be WICKED CAREFUL to put it in the exact same spot.

I had two irons, one L&H iron like the one above, and another iron that a cowman from Davis Creek, California built for me. He made the A 2" tall for me, and he made it out of bronze, but he used skinny bar stock, the way a hot iron is made. The purpose of the block of bronze (the way L&H makes them) is to hold the cold for a longer duration. A hot iron doesn't need to be that way because a hot iron is branded on a critter in a matter of seconds, and then put back in the fire to heat up again. Anyhow, it was the same height, but a little different shape. Long story short, I needed to touch up Shakes' brands, and I made a mistake and used a different iron the second time. Unfortunately the mistake didn't show up for several weeks, so I didn't realize how bad I had just screwed up his brand.

The moral of the story is....

PAY ATTENTION TO WHAT YOU'RE DOING SO YOUR DOG DOESN'T HAVE TO SPEND THE REST OF HIS LIFE LOOKING LIKE POOR OL' SHAKES!!



Remember, a good, plastic-like imprint of your iron will eventually grow back like this.....



#2 - If you are branding ribs or hips remember to clip the hair first. My buddy Ryan and I tried to freeze brand his dogs on the ribs with Ryan's beef cattle hot iron. Being a hot iron, it's obviously made of steel, as opposed to bronze, so it didn't want to hold the cold. Our next mistake was not clipping the hair. We tried, but the clippers wouldn't cut it. You need animal hair clippers, not the good old Wahl clippers your mom used on you when you were a kid for your bowl haircuts, and then later on during high school to trim your mullet LOL!! Anyway, you can get away with not clipping the ears, but you won't be able get the cold down to the hair follicles in the hide properly through the thick coat on the ribs and the hips if you don't clip the hair. Ryan has fine haired Walker dogs, but the coat was still too thick, and the brands didn't take.

That's all there is to it, gang. Good luck, and don't forget to post your brand pics on here when you successfully freeze brand your own dogs!