

The author's horse, "Tank," with a livestock-chalk phone number



# May I See Some **ID?**

IT'S SCARY TO THINK OF YOUR HORSE GETTING LOOSE OR BEING separated from you, but it could happen. Consider the following scenarios:

- Your boarding barn must be evacuated because of a wildfire. Your horse is trailered to safety by volunteers and placed in a group with other horses.
- You're trail riding and your horse spooks, dumps you and takes off.
- A hurricane is headed your way, but you can't evacuate your horse, so he is turned loose in a large paddock to ride out the storm. He escapes the paddock because a tree blows down on the fence line.

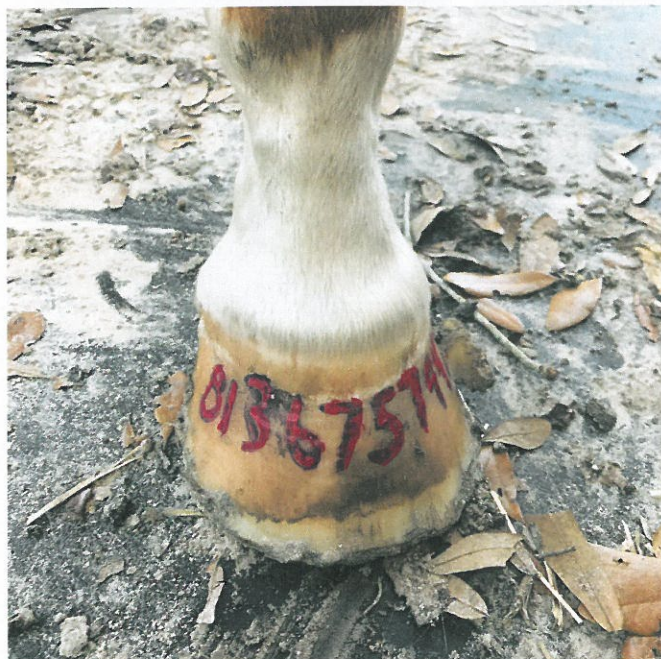
It's important to think about ways not only to place ID on your horse, but also to prove that you own him. Here are some options.

### Permanent identification

**MICROCHIPPING** IS AN INCREASINGLY POPULAR METHOD OF permanent identification for your horse and is considered the gold standard. It's like having a VIN for your horse, according to *NetPosse.com*. Microchipping is a relatively simple and inexpensive option, and can be performed by your vet. Each microchip number is unique and can't be changed. Once registered with an animal registry service, such as the NetPosse Identification Program Registry, it both identifies the horse and links it to the owner.

Some organizations, including the United States Hunter Jumper Association, require microchipping in horses and ponies competing in their events. AQHA does not require microchipping at this time, but can record your horse's microchip number on his registration papers with proper documentation and can also look up your horse in its database by its microchip ID.

This American Quarter Horse models a nail polish phone number.



ANNA STADDON

**If you were separated from  
your horse, how hard  
would it be for the two of  
you to be reunited?**

**By Kathy A. Johnson**

**Lip tattooing.** If your Quarter Horse is or was a racehorse, he already has a tattoo, since AQHA requires all racehorses to have a lip tattoo prior to racing. Non-racers can be tattooed also, and the number can be recorded on your AQHA registration certificate. The downside to lip tattoos is that they can fade with age and become hard to read.

**Hoof branding.** This semi-permanent process involves using a hot iron to brand the hoof with identification such as a phone number or ZIP code. Hoof branding is painless, and if done properly, should not harm the hooves. It will have to be repeated every few months as the hooves grow out.

**Freeze branding.** Freeze branding uses liquid nitrogen and a brass branding iron to mark the horse with a unique two- or three-character brand. The cold from the nitrogen destroys color follicles so that hair grows back white. You'll need to check with your state registry to see if your proposed brand has been used already, and you'll also want to register your brand with your state's brand inspection office. In some states, it's illegal to mark a horse without registering it with the state.

**Freeze marking.** Used by the Bureau of Land Management on captured wild horses and burros, freeze marking is also done with liquid nitrogen. It's a more complicated marking system than freeze branding and utilizes the International Alpha Angle System.

Visible marks made by freeze branding and freeze marking may also be a deterrent to theft. However, you may not want your horse permanently marked in this way, especially if you show him.

## Temporary options

EVEN IF YOUR HORSE HAS A PERMANENT FORM OF ID, YOU MAY also want to have some form of temporary ID with your contact information on it for use when trail riding or in the case of a natural disaster. You and your horse will be reunited much more quickly if whoever finds him has a phone number to call immediately.

Here are some options for visible, temporary ID, with comments from my personal experience during preparations for Hurricane Irma:

- Write your phone number on his hooves with permanent marker or fingernail polish. Might not be visible if his hooves are covered in mud.
- Engrave a halter tag with your name and phone number. If your horse breaks his halter, he'll lose this form of ID. And if he's turned out in a halter, it should be a breakaway.
- Braid a luggage tag with your contact information into his tail. Works best in a "dirty" tail with no shine/detangling product in it. I tried this with my horse before Hurricane Irma, and the tag came out even before the storm hit.
- Duct tape a small plastic bag with your contact information to his halter.
- Shave your phone number into his hair. Not pretty, but it won't come off!
- Spray paint your phone number on his body. May be uncomfortable for the horse if his skin is sensitive, and some paint washes off in rain.
- Livestock chalk or marker. I also tried this method, and as soon as my horse rolled, the chalk numbers rubbed off.



LYNDA HARRIS

**A freeze brand is the most visible permanent form of equine ID, and it may serve as a theft deterrent.**

There are a few products specifically marketed for identification in emergencies, including Sierra View Ranch General Store's I.C.E. UltraLite, which clips through a mane braid, and the Manestay, which clips into an unbraided mane. Both are brightly colored and visible from a distance.

EquestriSafe makes an Equine/Horse Multi-Purpose Identification Collar, as well as an Equine Fetlock ID Band. Both are made of nylon webbing in bright colors. The fetlock band is customized with your phone number or other information, such as the word "microchipped."

## Documentation

IN ADDITION TO MAKING SURE YOUR HORSE HAS SOME FORM OF ID on him, you should also collect documentation proving your ownership.

Make copies of your registration papers, your horse's Coggins certificate and any other documentation you think would help reunite you more quickly. Make sure you include your horse's microchip or tattoo number in your documents, if applicable. Include photos of your horse from all angles and photograph any unique or unusual markings or whorls your horse has. You can also take a photo with your cell phone of you and your horse together.

Keep one copy of these identification records at home and one in your vehicle.

Note: Never attach your horse's Coggins certificate to his halter. If an unscrupulous person finds your horse, he could then take him out of state. ❏

*Kathy A. Johnson is a freelance writer from the Tampa Bay, Florida, area. She plans to invest in some form of visible ID for her horse, Heza Eye Catcher, aka "Tank," before the start of hurricane season.*

## More on Microchipping



GET ALL THE DETAILS ON MICROCHIPPING IN the digital issue of *America's Horse*. We've got an article from the archives of *The American Quarter Horse Journal* that tells you everything you need to know. Go to [www.aqha.com/americashorse](http://www.aqha.com/americashorse) to access the digital magazine.