The most popular locations for brands on horses are the left or right hip or the left or right shoulder. Other less common locations are ribs, stifles, and jaws. Cattle are usually branded on hips and ribs.

Reading Brands:

For many new livestock owners, the art of reading a brand is a mystery. Brands, to the inexperienced, resemble hieroglyphics; to the experienced livestock person, however, they become a readable language. With practice and an understanding of some important brand terms, the average person can easily acquire basic skills in reading brands. There are three accepted rules for reading brands. They are left to right, Top to Bottom and outside to inside.

Example of Left to Right: \( X/T \) Should be read \( X \) slash \( T \) straightaway

Example of Top to Bottom: \( X \) \( X/T \) Should be read \( X \) over \( X \) \( T \)

Example of Outside to Inside: \( \bigcirc \) Should be read Circle with \( R \) inside

Other Examples:

If a letter or symbol is made backwards from its normal position, it's read as a reverse \( F \), or whatever other letter it might be.

A letter partially over on its face or back is said to be "tumbling."

If a letter lies horizontally on its face or back, it is called "lazy."

Letters with a curving flare at the top and rounded angles are "running."

Add a dash to the left and the right at the top, and you have a “flying” letter.

Add legs and it becomes a “walking” letter.
A letter placed so that the bottom touches the inside of a curve is said to be "rocking." In this particular instance, the brand would probably be called "anchor."

Curves not attached to letters are known as "quarter circles," or "half circles," depending on the arc.

Letters or symbols formed together are called "connected or monogram"

When a letter is below the other, then the lower symbol is said to be "swinging." In registering brands, owners sometimes omit the "connected" or "swinging." Thus, might be read simply Diamond over J monogram rather than Diamond Swinging J.

**Besides the traditional letter and figure brands, there are some marks known as “character brands.”**

For instance, this is read as the turtle brand.

This is read as the pitchfork brand.

This is read as the rocking chair brand.

This is read as the key brand.

This is read as the spade brand.