

# BELOVED SENIOR HORSES

Acupressure support by Amy Snow and Nancy Zidonis



Even at 34 years old Winnie retained her noble-looking neck and head. Her dappled, rich, dark coat was still lustrous and her eye glittered with vitality. Yet the telltale signs of encroaching age were evident.

Winnie's face was peppered with white and her once powerful, dense, articulating muscles had given way to 'senior wasting.' Winnie's spine had become visibly concave and bony and her massive American Quarter Horse hindquarter had lost its fullness and tone. When we went for a ride she was eager to get going and

the spirit of her younger years was still there for the first half hour and then her age caught up with her. Her 'giddyup' was still in her heart but no longer in her legs. After 34 years of being an amazing riding companion it was time for Winnie to enjoy lots of love and long, peaceful-days grazing in the pasture keeping the younger horses company. At 38 she crossed over after being the best horse in the world every minute of her life.

During those last years Winnie was stoic about her aches and pains. Horses by their nature don't exhibit their pain or any limitation

since in the wild they would be left behind to die, they just keep going with no complaint until they can no longer keep up. Domesticated horses are hardwired to do the same, though the claim on this survival isn't the same. Most of us find ways to take care of our horses, who have been a member of our family, during their waning years. Part of taking care of these senior-horse citizens is to have them be as comfortable as possible since they often suffer from arthritic joints, sore backs and other age-related issues, just as we do as we age.

The ancient eastern healing art of acupressure offers our

senior friends a lot of relief from the aches and pains of aging. As the years go on horses experience arthritic, stiff limbs, problems with digestion leading to colic or absorption of nutrient issues, and other age-related health conditions. Thousands of years of acupressure has shown that it:

- strengthens the horse's immune system
- lubricates the joints to improve flexibility and mobility
- reduces inflammation associated with arthritis
- enhances blood circulation for better overall functioning



- releases endorphins and natural cortisone to relieve pain and increase the horse's comfort level.

A weekly acupressure session with their favourite human goes a long way to having a healthy, happy older horse. Our senior equines want to do all the great things they did when they were young and it is up to us to help them do as much as they can.

Acupressure is an especially effective complementary therapy for managing chronic health issues and preventing illness. As in other forms of Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM), the healing intent is to provide an internal environment where the horse is experiencing a harmonious flow of chi, life-promoting energy, and blood. When chi and blood are impeded in

any way the horse's immune system is compromised and the body is not receiving the proper nourishment for the internal organs and body tissues to function healthfully.

The horse's body is composed of an extensive network of channels where the chi and blood flow. There are specific 'pools' of energy, called acupoints, along the major channels where we can access and influence the chi energy that is flowing through the acupoints. When performing an acupressure session with your horse, you will be using acupoints that have been proven to help manage issues associated with aging.

The following acupoints have been selected for a weekly acupressure session to offer pain relief from arthritis,

enhance digestion, improve the flexibility of tendons and ligaments, and to support the general well-being of your horse. See the chart below.

Bladder 11 (Bl 11) is the influential point for bones. It is known to strengthen bones, relax soft tissues, and benefit joints. This point is commonly used when there is any form of arthritis present.

Stomach 36 (St 36) is used extensively to aid digestion and promote gastrointestinal health while also regulating and tonifying blood and life-force energy. This acupoint is known to enhance the animal's activity level and assist in the absorption of nutrients.

Gall Bladder 34 (GB 34) acupoint has the attribute of influencing the strength

and flexibility of tendons, ligaments and joints. Additionally, it can reduce atrophy of the older horse's soft tissues.

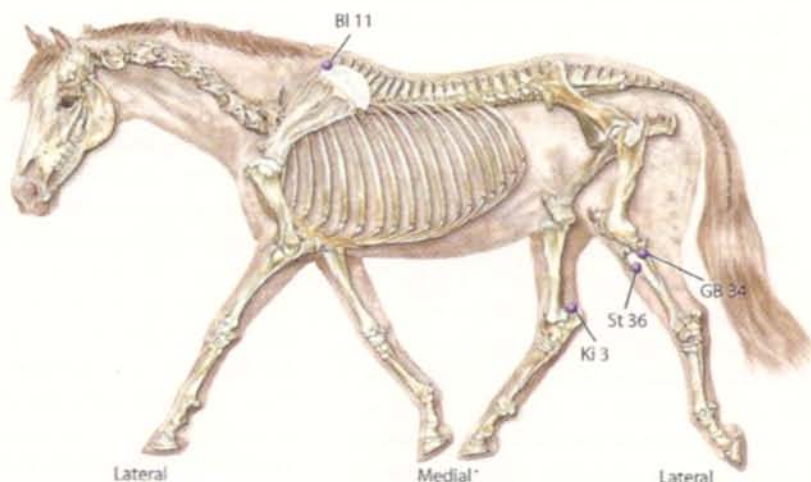
Kidney 3 (Ki 3) brings forth the original essence and energy of the animal which supports the horse's basic constitution. This acupoint is often used to add essential energy during the winter phase of life.

By performing a senior equine acupressure session as described in the box below every five to seven days, you'll contribute to your older horse's health and well-being for all his years, which could be many more.



For details of courses in the UK see the DIARY and [www.animalacupressure.com](http://www.animalacupressure.com)

## Senior Acupoints



Point	Location
Bl 11	Found in front of the withers, about 1.5 inches lateral to the topline.
St 36	One finger width from the head of the fibula, on the lateral side of the tibia.
GB 34	Located on the outside of the hind leg, at the space between the tibia and fibula.
Ki 3	Found on the inside of the hindleg, at the thinnest part of the hock.

## SENIOR ACUPRESSURE SESSION

While following the chart, place the soft, fleshy part of the tip of your thumb on the point indicated in the chart at a 45 to 90 degree angle to the horse's body. Use about 500 grams of pressure, take care not to poke or hurt the horse. Comfortably rest your other hand on the horse, too. Hold your thumb on each acupoint and count to 30 or watch the horse for evidence of releasing of energy. An energetic release would be licking, yawning, stretching, or passing air. Repeat this procedure on both sides of your horse.