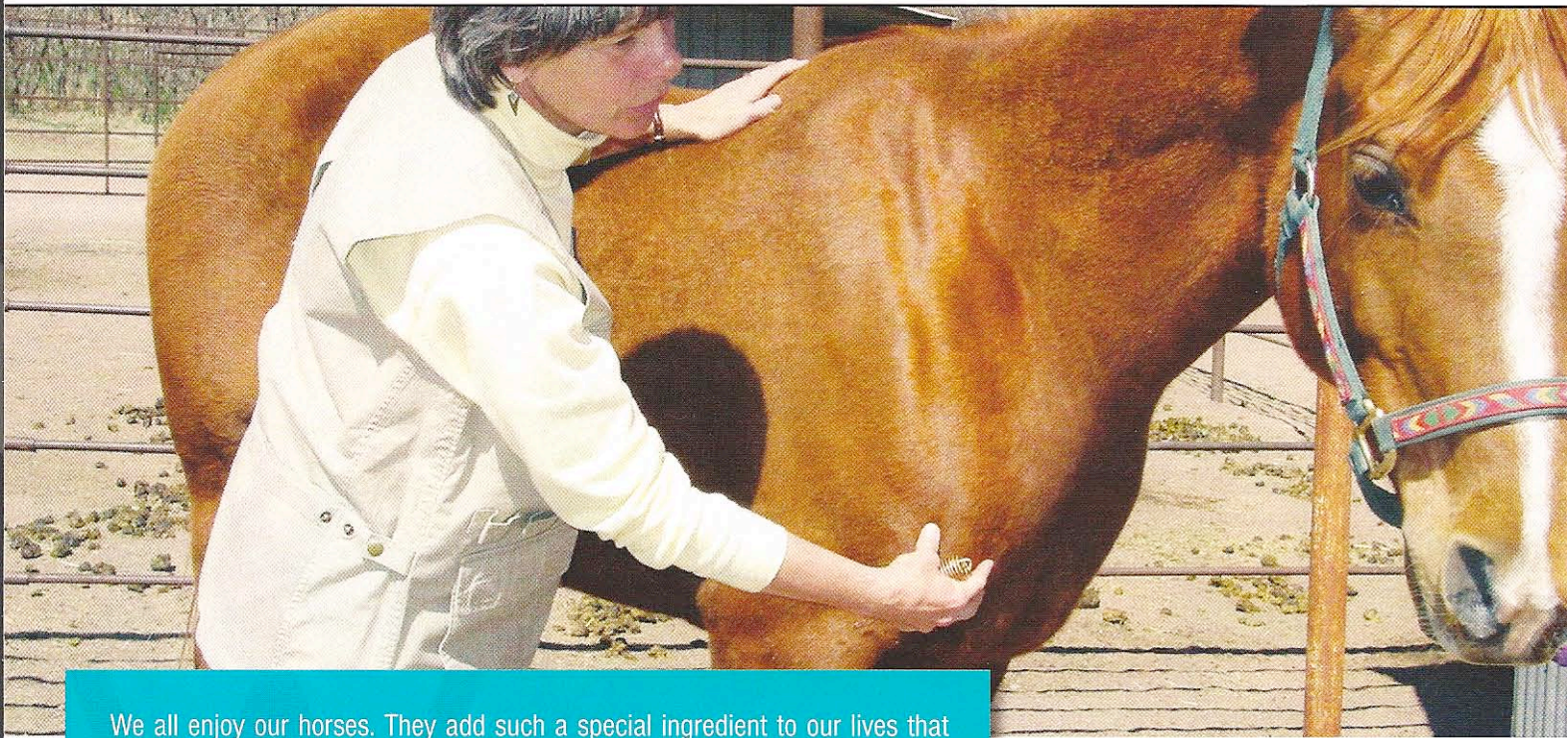


ACUPRESSURE

by Amy Snow & Nancy Zidonis



We all enjoy our horses. They add such a special ingredient to our lives that we want to give them the best we can offer, so they stay happy and healthy. The issue is, while the physical and emotional needs of our horses are no different from those of their ancestors and wild counterparts, they must contend with human intervention.

Today's horse

Try as we may, it is difficult to replicate a horse's natural existence. An equine herd can cover 30 to 40 miles in a day, seeking grasses and herbs for optimal nutrition. When the winds whip and the rain lashes, the leader knows where to find shelter from the elements. They follow the paths of their ancestors. These animals are highly adaptive, and deeply connected to their own instincts for survival.

Domesticated horses depend on us for all their needs. We strive to provide a healthful environment, a reasonable activity level, quality feed, and adequate shelter. Many of us might even be overzealous about blanketing, shoeing, administering an abundance of supplements, and a host of other well-intended

methods of equine care that may or may not be supporting the horse's health in the long run.

How acupressure can help

In Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM), we look at the nature of the animal in relation to his environment. Though the horse has a natural ability to adapt to living in fenced pastures, being enclosed in stalls, fed from elevated feeders and so on, we need to recognize that many equine management techniques can result in horses that aren't in optimal balance for good health.

Acupressure, like acupuncture, is based on Traditional Chinese Medicine. It helps direct us in supporting a horse's health by allowing life-promoting energy, called Chi,

to flow unimpeded through his body, so all his internal organs can function properly.

HINT

A balanced and a harmonious flow of Chi is necessary for good health.

According to TCM, we can influence the flow of Chi energy by stimulating specific pools of energy, called "acupoints", located along pathways or channels known as meridians. These meridians form a network of channels that run throughout the horse's body. If there is a blockage along a meridian pathway, then the energy in the body becomes imbalanced. Once an imbalance occurs, the affected portion of the body is not receiving the nourishment Chi provides, and the immune system may not be able to fend off illness.

As esoteric as this may sound, conventional medicine is coming to accept

POINTS every rider should know

that Chinese Medicine has great value in building the immune system, accelerating healing after surgery or injury, reducing pain, enhancing blood circulation, and more.

Acupressure, as opposed to acupuncture, does not require needles. It is noninvasive, safe, and always available since we can simply use our fingertips to influence the pools of Chi along the meridians. The novice as well as the trained practitioner can apply acupressure techniques and assist in removing blockages so the horse's Chi can flow smoothly again, restoring energetic balance. A trained practitioner has the advantage of knowing which acupoints would be most effective, given a specific condition.

Five points for health

Chinese medicine is best utilized as preventive medicine. The goal is for the horse's energy to be in constant balance so there is less possibility of illness or injury. When an energetically-balanced horse experiences an injury, he will most likely recover more readily.

The acupoints on the chart (right) are designed to help with generally balancing Chi throughout your horse's body. These five points address common equine issues: digestion, physical flexibility, calming, the immune system, and spinal and hindquarter strength.

1. *Stomach 36 (St 36)*, Leg 3 Mile, is the Master Point for the gastrointestinal tract. It enhances digestive functioning so the body can break down the nutrients from food and herbs, making them bio-available for absorption.

2. *Gall Bladder 34 (GB 34)*, Yang Mound Spring, is the Influential Point

for strengthening and increasing the flexibility of tendons and ligaments, and maintaining the body's ability to move freely. Stimulating this point can help minimize physical injuries.

3. *Heart 7 (Ht 7)*, Spirit's Gate, offers the horse's heart original essential energy to help clear his mind and generally calm his emotional state. This point can be used in any stressful situation or to enhance mental clarity necessary for training.

4. *Large Intestine 11 (LI 11)*, Crooked Pond, is known as a powerful immune system strengthening point. It is also a Tonification Point – that is, it enhances the flow of blood and energy throughout the body. This point is commonly

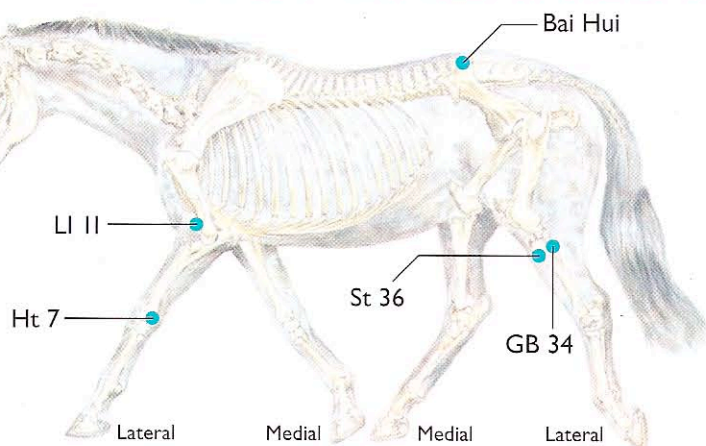
included in most health-maintenance acupressure protocols.

5. *Bai Hui*, Point of 100 Meeting (also called Heaven's Gate), is a classic equine point located on the dorsal aspect at the lumbosacral space. It benefits the hindquarters and spinal column. It can be used for arthritic conditions and lameness of the hips and hind legs, as well for overexertion and irregular estrous cycles.

HINT

With these five acupoints, you can make a significant difference in your horse's physical and emotional health.

CHI ENERGY BALANCING



POINT	LOCATION
GB 34	Located on the outside of the hindleg, just forward to the head of the fibula.
Ht 7	Located on the caudolateral aspect of the front leg, just above the accessory carpal bone.
LI 11	Found on the lateral side of the elbow.
St 36	Lateral aspect of hind leg, one finger width from the tibial crest and head of the fibula.
Bai Hui	Located on the dorsal midline in the lumbosacral space.