



# COLD Legs, COLD Horse May Mean a PROBLEM is Brewing

by Amy Snow & Nancy Zidonis,  
Authors of *Equine Acupressure: A Working Manual*

It was a brilliantly clear and warm late summer morning when Kate went out to get her favorite mare, Tara. She was usually ready and waiting in the morning for whatever adventure the day might hold. Tara was standing in her stall with her head down as if to graze, but she was not chewing on anything. Kate gave her a pat on the rump to let her know she was there and to awaken her. Tara slowly raised her head and looked at Kate with a dull eye then looked away. This was not like Tara. Kate stroked her neck; it felt cooler than usual. She started to wonder if there was something wrong.

After a quick brushing, Kate lifted Tara's near foreleg to clean her hoof and she realized Tara's entire foreleg right up to her knee was icy cold. She checked her other legs and all of them were extremely cold, too. Kate walked her out of the barn and into the sun to see if that would help. Tara moved haltingly and reluctantly.

Kate's background in Traditional Chinese Medicine and equine acupressure enabled her to select specific acupressure points that she knew would begin to increase the circulation of Chi and Blood throughout Tara's body.

## Traditional Chinese Medicine

From a Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) perspective, Tara was cold because her body was not able to circulate the necessary Chi (pronounced Chee, also seen as Qi or Ki), the energy that creates activity and warms the body, and Blood, the fluid that flows in the vessels and meridians (energy pathways) to provide nutrients. Without the proper circulation of these two vital substances, the body literally turns cold.

Simply by touching the horse's body, especially on the extremities, you can ascertain how well Chi and Blood are circulating in the body. If the limbs feel cold you know that the horse's legs and hooves are not receiving the warmth, promotion and nourishment of Chi and Blood; thus muscles, tendons, ligaments, blood vessels, and nerves can suffer. If this condition is not resolved relatively quickly, the horse can develop more severe and debilitating conditions.

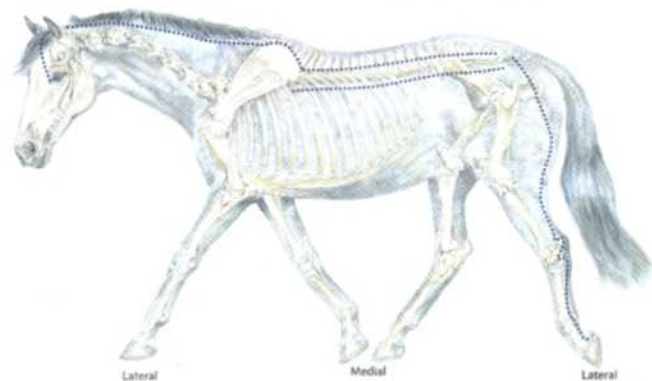
## Acupressure to Enhance Circulation

Acupressure is based on TCM and is one method of increasing circulation that the owner or trainer can provide for a horse. By stimulating acupressure points, which are specific pools of energy along the energetic pathways, known as meridians, both Chi and Blood are encouraged to move more readily and freely to become rebalanced. When these vital substances are balanced, the horse's body is warm, nourished, and his vitality is restored.



Turie Norman, DVM, of Boulder, CO, demonstrates the two-finger technique. (Photos and illustrations courtesy of Tallgrass Publishers)

## Bladder Meridian



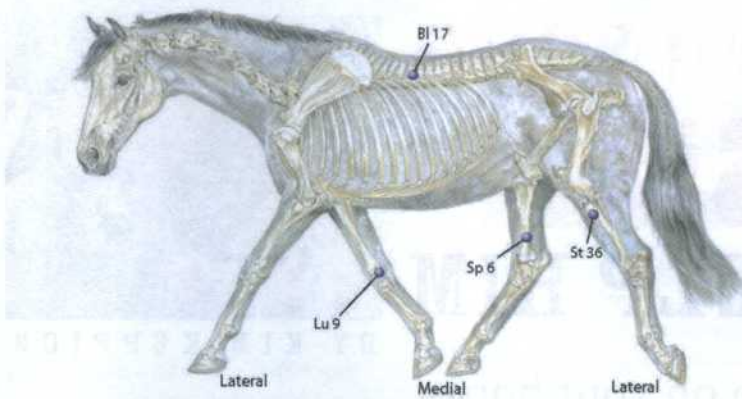
## Indicators of Poor Circulation

- Cold to the touch
- Dull or worried in both eye and attitude
- Movement may be uneven, slow
- Stumbles more often or unsure in foot placement

## Reasons a horse may experience poor circulation:

- Insufficient or lack of regular exercise
  - Stressful environment
  - Overwork, illness
  - Malnutrition, excessive external cold
- Basically, any situation that would cause the animal's body to shut-down and impede the natural, harmonious flow of Chi and Blood

## Points to Improve Circulation



Point	Traditional Name	Function/Location
Bl 17	Diaphragm's Hollow	Influential Point for Blood, invigorates and tonifies the Blood. Found about 3 inches lateral to the 12th thoracic vertebrae.
Sp 6	Three Yin Meeting	Invigorates the Blood. Found 3 inches above the tip of the medial malleolus, at the back edge of the tibia.
St 36	Leg 3 Miles	Regulates and strengthens Blood and Chi. Located on the outside of the hindleg, below the patella.
Lu 9	Great Abyss	Influential point for arteries. Found on the inside of the front leg, just in front of the accessory carpal bone.



*Thumb Technique*

### A GUIDE TO AN ACUPRESSURE SESSION

Start by finding a comfortable location for you and your horse, where he feels safe and there are few distractions.

Slowly, take three even breaths in and out. Think about how you want to help your horse feel better; taking a moment to formulate the intent of your treatment is very important.

Begin by resting one hand near your horse's shoulder. Using the heel of your other hand, place it at the poll and gently stroke down his neck, just off the midline, tracing the Bladder Meridian (see Bladder Meridian chart). Continue stroking down to the hindquarters staying to the side of the midline. To finish, stroke down the outside of his leg to the coronary band. Your opposite hand can trail along the same path touching the horse lightly. Repeat this stroking

procedure along the Bladder Meridian three times on each side of your horse.

### Acupressure Points to Improve Circulation

Rest one hand on your horse wherever it is comfortable. You are going to perform the actual Point Work with the other hand. Use either the thumb or two-finger technique depending on what is most comfortable for you.

**Thumb technique:** Place the tip of your thumb directly on the acupressure point, also called "acupoint," and hold the point gently, but with intent, counting to 30 before releasing each point.

**Two-finger technique:** Put your middle finger on top of your index finger and then place your index finger gently, but with intentional firmness, directly on the acupressure point, counting to 30 before releasing each point.

Follow the Points to Improve Circulation Chart. Watch your horse's reaction to the point work.

Healthy energy releases include:

- yawning
- deep breathing
- muscle twitches
- release of air
- softening of the eye

If your horse is overly reactive to

a particular point or exhibits a pain reaction, work the acupoint in front of the reactive point or behind it. Try that point again at a later session.

To complete your treatment session, rest your hand comfortably on his shoulder. Trace the Bladder Meridian just as you did at the beginning of the session. Place the heel of your other hand just off his poll and stroke down his neck, over his back to his hindquarters, keeping your hand to the side of his spine and down the outside of his leg. Repeat this procedure three times on each side of your horse.

*NOTE: It may take 24 hours for the effects of an acupressure treatment to be experienced. Occasionally, the initial issue can seem to be worse during that time before it resolves.*

*Nancy Zidonis and Amy Snow are the authors of: Equine Acupressure: A Working Manual, The Well-Connected Dog: A Guide To Canine Acupressure, and Acu-Cat: A Guide to Feline Acupressure. They own Tallgrass Publishers, which offers Meridian Charts and training videos. They also provide hands-on and online training courses worldwide, including a Practitioner Certification Program. Contact them at 888-841-7211, [www.animalacupressure.com](http://www.animalacupressure.com), email [acupressure4all@earthlink.net](mailto:acupressure4all@earthlink.net)*

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