

the quarterly journal of wholistic equine care

# **H** *natural* **HORSE** M A G A Z I N E

*dedicated to your horse*

**WHEN DISEASE IS NEARBY:**

Support your horse's  
immune system  
**NATURALLY!**

**BITLESS RIDING:**

Why ride without a bit?  
Why ride with one??

**PASTURE**

**SOIL:**

*Life As  
We Could  
Know It!*

**HERBS FOR HORSES:**  
Nurture your own from  
*seedling to harvest!*



## EQUINE ACUPRESSURE: ANCIENT HEALING FOR TODAY

by Amy Snow & Nancy Zidonis



*Finger technique*

**H**ow would you like to replenish and maintain your horse's optimal health and strength while building your bond with him? These are some of the benefits of learning equine acupressure and the great thing is you can learn to do it yourself.

### Acupressure - Ancient Healing

Acupressure, like acupuncture, is rooted in Traditional Chinese Medicine. Both disciplines use the same meridian and point system, yet differ because you are contributing your touch and energy with acupressure, rather than inserting needles. Only veterinarians with acupuncture training are allowed to use needles. By learning acupressure, you can participate in the health and well-being of your horse. Sharing this knowledge with your horse offers you both a rich experience.

Thousands of years of clinical observation have proven the benefits of acupressure, which include:

- Building the immune system
- Relieving muscle spasms
- Releasing emotional blockages
- Strengthening muscles, tendons, joints and bones
- Replenishing the horse's physical and emotional energy
- Releasing endorphins necessary to increase energy or relieve pain
- Balancing energy to optimize the body's natural ability to heal

- Releasing natural cortisone to reduce swelling and inflammation
- Enhancing mental clarity and calm required for focus in training and performance
- Resolving injuries more readily by increasing the blood supply and removing toxins.

### Acupressure is Becoming Well-Accepted within the Caring Horse Community

Acupressure has been in continuous use with animals from ancient times to now. In the past ten years there has been a surge of interest in bringing this ancient healing art back to the forefront of animal healthcare. Equine acupressure is an emerging career as evidenced by the growing number of equine acupressure practitioners worldwide. As further evidence, Hocking College in southern Ohio has devoted acupressure course work to their Equine Sciences curriculum. The National Certification Board for Therapeutic Massage and Bodywork (NCBTMB) offers Continuing Education credits for animal acupressure. And, the National Board of Certification for Animal Acupressure & Massage has prepared examinations for these disciplines that reflect standards of professionalism.

Horses are particularly responsive to acupressure. Just think how sensitive horses are; when a fly is hovering prior to landing on a horse, the surface of the horse's skin is already moving in anticipa-



Thumb technique

tion and in an effort to get rid of the fly. Another example of the horse's sensitivity to physical and energetic space is the fact that horses don't bump into each other when they stampede. They are highly aware, energetically connected animals.

Combining your horse's energetic connection and your healing and loving intention with the ancient healing modality of acupressure offers a powerful resource you take with you anywhere you go.

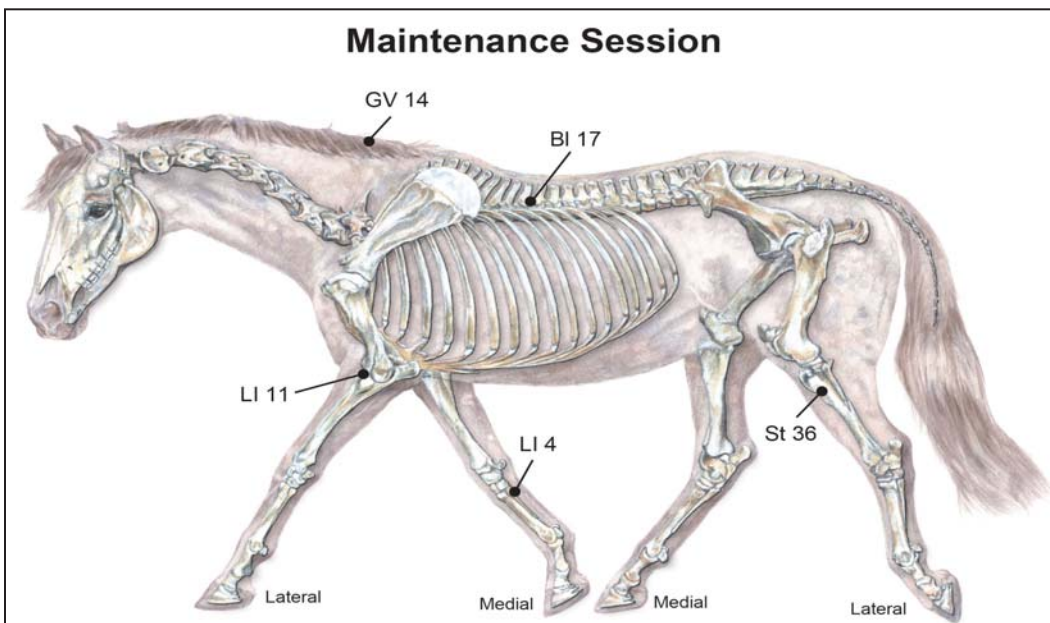
### How does Acupressure Work?

Unique to Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) is the concept of *chi*, also seen as *Qi* or *Ki* and pronounced as "chee," life-promoting energy. Chi and blood must flow harmoniously throughout the horse's body along channels or pathways known as meridians. When there's any type of obstruction or stagnation of the flow of these two vital substances, the body can't function optimally because the body isn't receiving the nourishment it needs.

Chinese medicine aims to prevent illness by maintaining a balanced flow of chi and blood to all the internal organ systems and tissues. To be healthy a horse needs to have a good diet, daily exercise, rest, as natural an environment as possible, and acupressure to help sustain and replenish the balance of chi and blood.

Chi performs many essential functions while circulating through the horse's body:

- Generates body warmth
- Protects the body from external harmful pathogens
- Governs the retention of body substances
- Creates all body movement; it is the source of voluntary and involuntary movement
- Serves as the basis of organ functions.



### Maintenance Session

When chi is blocked along the meridians or within an organ, an internal imbalance occurs and the horse's body becomes compromised. This imbalance can lead to health issues. For example, let's say your horse has a drippy nose, his breathing sounds congested, and his energy level is low. You know that his Lung organ system, which is the Lung organ and its meridian, has become imbalanced and his lungs are not receiving the proper amount of chi and blood to be healthy.

To help restore your horse's health, you can use acupressure points, (also called "acupoints"), known to stimulate and rebalance the Lung chi. By palpating specific acupoints and adding your own energy you can work with your horse's body to remove the blockage. This is how acupressure works.

Better yet, don't wait until your horse has a health problem. If you offered your horse a simple Health Maintenance Session to support his immune system every six or seven days, you may not have to deal with any health problems, short of an injury or accident.

Point	Location
BI 17	Approximately 3 inches lateral to the dorsal midline in the 12 <sup>th</sup> intercostal space.
LI 11	On the lateral side of the elbow.
LI 4	Located just below the head of the medial splint bone.
St 36	Located on the outside of the hind leg, below the patella.
GV 14	Located on the dorsal midline, between the 7 <sup>th</sup> cervical and 1 <sup>st</sup> thoracic vertebrae.

## Health Maintenance Acupressure Session

A session incorporates therapeutic intent with the understanding that your connection with your horse is a dynamic energy exchange between two equal partners. It begins with selecting a location that is safe and has few distractions.

Take three deep breaths; then rest one hand on your horse wherever it is comfortable. With your other hand place the soft tip of your thumb or two-fingers (see photographs), depending on what is most comfortable for you, on an acupoint shown in the chart.

- **Thumb technique:** Place the soft tip of your thumb directly on the acupoint and hold the point gently but with intent, counting to 30 before releasing each point. This technique is usually best on the body of the horse.
- **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 acupoint, counting to 30 before releasing each point. The two-finger technique is best used on the horse's lower limbs.

All of the acupoints on the chart are bilateral; we suggest you work with these points on both sides of your horse. Watch your horse's reaction to the point work. Healthy energy releases are: yawning, deep breathing, muscle twitches, release of air, and softening of the eye. If your horse is overly reactive to a particular point or exhibits a pain reaction, move on to the next point. Try that point again at a later session.

When you have completed the point work, give your horse a hug and allow him to rest or turn him out for at least 24 hours, for his chi to circulate, replenish his body, and enable him to be a healthy, happy horse. ♪

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### About the authors:

Nancy Zidonis and Amy Snow are the authors of: *Equine Acupressure: A Working Manual*, *Acu-Dog: A Guide to Canine Acupressure*, *The Well-Connected Dog: A Guide to Canine Acupressure*, and *Acu-Cat: A Guide to Feline Acupressure*. They founded Tallgrass, which offers books, manuals, DVDs, and meridian charts. Tallgrass also provides hands-on and online training courses worldwide including a 330-hour Practitioner Certification Program. Tallgrass is an approved school for the Dept. of Higher Education through the State of Colorado and an approved provider of National Certification Board of Therapeutic Massage and Bodywork (NCBTMB) Continuing Education credits.  
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