

ACUPRESSURE FOR HORSES

Hands-On Techniques to Solve Performance Problems
and Ease Pain and Discomfort



**FEATURING
DR. INA'S
POPULAR
"HORSE TYPES"
EVALUATION
SYSTEM**

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Official Website

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Foreword



Traditional Chinese medicinal practices are gaining more and more popularity. Like many, I am constantly trying out alternative practices to supplement treatments for my horses' problems. Before you can decide on a specific method, you must really know your horse. You have to tune in and intuit what the horse's problem may be and then search for solutions, without preconceived ideas about what may work. Admittedly, the best treatments will never replace the comprehensive, complete, gymnastic horse training advocated by classical riding instructors. Alternative treatments cannot work miracles in the face of bad riding or an unbalanced education. While the best foundation for a sound horse remains a multifaceted training program with diverse physical and mental exercises, there is still much one can do to supplement each horse's health and wellness.

In the course of many acupuncture and acupressure treatments for my horses, I have come to know and value Dr. Ina Gösmeier, the author of this book. Educated as a mainstream veterinarian, Dr. Gösmeier also practices and supports acupuncture and acupressure for horses. In contrast to acupuncture, acupressure is a therapy that can be administered to horses by their riders and caretakers. I have been especially impressed by Dr. Gösmeier's winning way with horses, including how quickly she can grasp and understand their personalities (identifying their body constitution types according to Chinese medicine). With this approach, she immediately wins a horse's trust and can quickly find treatment points and meridians. At the same time, Dr. Gösmeier possesses the very rare gift of being able to consolidate the diverse and complicated facts of medical cases into explanations that the layperson and listeners with very little related education can easily follow.

I wish the reader great fun in exploring the interesting and helpful chapters that follow, and I also hope that as many horses as possible can be helped through these methods.



Ingrid Klimke

Winner of Two Olympic Gold Medals in Eventing

How Acupressure Works and When to Use It



This book was written for horse owners, riders, barn managers, and horse lovers. Therefore, it is not necessarily meant for those with prior medical knowledge, but rather is a guide to acupressure that will make it possible for the average horse person to successfully treat her own horse.

You can use this book in various ways:

- If this is your first introduction to the basics of Chinese medicine and you would like to understand the history of the practice, you should read the book chapter by chapter.
- If the background information is already familiar to you, skip the chapter titled “Historical and Theoretical Background of Acupressure,” which was generously contributed by veterinarian Dr. Lothar Friese. Go directly to the chapter titled “Horse Types” (p. 38) and get started with the practical application. Whether you are a rider or horse owner, this important chapter will make it possible for you to identify your horse by body constitution type. Every treatment going forward will depend upon knowing your horse’s type.
- If you already have experience with acupuncture and acupressure and you are simply looking for advice for a specific problem, utilize the table of contents or index to find the relevant section. Just remember that you must first know your horse’s body constitution type before you can make any decisions about acupressure treatments.



At a glance: All the acupuncture points described in this book.

The theoretical basis for acupuncture and acupressure is the same. In both, you do not only treat the affected organ, but rather the entire horse. Mental and physical symptoms are considered together to determine the diagnosis and treatment.

Treatments are applied at the acupuncture points. These points are usually found where there is an electrical “charge” and where the skin’s resistance is lowered. According to the principles of Chinese medicine, there is a form of energy, called *qi*, (pronounced “chi” and also often referred to as ch’i or chi), which flows through the body’s meridians. As the current within a riverbed can change, so can this flow of energy.



In using moxibustion, mugwort is attached to the needle and lit. This method can be applied in the case of chronic bronchitis, for example.

There are many energetic explanations as to why an individual can become too full of qi, too low on qi, or have blocked qi. Through any of these conditions, one can develop illness, including chronic pain, rashes, or infections. Treatment at acupuncture points can correct these imbalances.

For many years, the Western world doubted the effectiveness of acupuncture. However, there is scientific evidence of acupuncture's beneficial effects. According to scientists Pomeranz and Stux, pain-relieving effects of acupuncture are based on these three phenomena:

1. By stimulating endorphins, such as enkephalin and dynorphin, acupuncture suppresses pain from traveling the spinal cord.
2. Acupuncture causes the middle brain to produce monoamine, a neurotransmitter that, in turn, further inhibits pain.
3. By causing the core region of the hypothalamus to release and distribute beta-endorphins, acupuncture positively influences the autonomic nervous system.

Acupuncture affects the body significantly more intensely than acupressure and

can therefore also heal disease. The application of acupuncture belongs in the hands of a veterinarian who is trained in Western medicine and has supplemented her knowledge with Chinese medicine.



Acupuncture needles vary in length and thickness.

Precise understanding of the meaning behind Chinese concepts, such as *yin* and *yang*, is the basis for a successful treatment. The veterinarian must be experienced using the Chinese diagnostic techniques of examining pulse and tongue. An exact diagnosis is necessary to determine which type of medicine should be utilized.

Acupuncture treatment takes place using needles, which are inserted at acupuncture points. In addition, a practitioner can attach herbs to the needle and light them, in order to generate a heat source at the acupuncture points. The herbs used are dried mugwort leaves (*Artemisia vulgaris*). This technique stimulates the body's energy and is called "moxibustion."

The main uses for acupuncture on horses include:

1. Treatment of painful conditions related to movement. For example, acupuncture can be used to treat all sorts of back tension and pain as well as related lameness. It also addresses resistance to the rider that is being caused by pain.

2. Treatment of both systemic disorders and disorders related to practical function, for example:

- Chronic respiratory disease
- Chronic diarrhea or tendency to colic
- Headshaking
- Sweet itch
- Unwillingness to breed in stallions
- Inability to conceive in mares
- Loss of appetite
- Seasonal drop in performance, especially in sport horses
- Psychological problems

Acupressure can be administered by the layperson. As Chinese medicine is an alternative practice, it will require time, patience, and interest to deepen your proficiency in this healing technique. Acupressure has been known in China since ancient times. Its application involves massaging specific acupuncture points.

Acupressure can be applied to horses on many levels. Mild sources of pain can be relieved and you can influence the mental health of your horse. In addition, acupressure is an optimal supplement to ongoing acupuncture treatments. For example, acupressure can be used in combination with acupuncture to treat issues arising before and after a long-term infection or a surgical procedure. Especially in rehabilitation from injury and/or after a surgery involving a limb, treatment on the affected limb is advised.

Those who spend time daily with a horse are often able to spot small, common issues, which can become a bigger problem if left untreated over time. Acupressure makes it easier to recognize these small discrepancies, then to respond in such a way as to positively influence the situation.

The success of the method, as already mentioned, depends on the application of acupressure on acupuncture points. There are considerably more acupuncture points than can be covered in this book, however, if you can learn how to locate the most important points and how to apply acupressure, you can expect lots of joy and many positive reactions from your horse. This is a good basis for helping the horse and strengthening the bond between horse and human. The more routine the use of acupressure becomes, the more the horse will look forward to and enjoy it.





Examples of acupuncture on the horse.

History and Theoretical Background of Acupressure

By Dr. med. vet. Lothar Friese

Acupressure is an ancient healing art, perhaps the very oldest in human history. It has its beginnings in the instinctive learnings of the earliest people, who sought to relieve or alleviate pain through pressure from their fingers. By doing so, they learned that pressing and rubbing certain points not only lessened pain, but also could help with other health complaints.

The development of this knowledge into a comprehensive medical system unfolded over a long time. Over 5,000 years ago, this system was already so far developed in China that needles were being used as part of the treatment. Archeological finds of needles crafted from bones and stones from this period

support this claim. In fact, not only were the hunters, shepherds, and farmers of Neolithic China aware of acupuncture points, but Europeans of this era also seemed to have known about them. This theory is based on the discovery of a mummified man whose body was revealed when an Alpine glacier melted; significantly, his body was tattooed at acupuncture points.

However, awareness in the European regions could not have been very widespread, otherwise, one thousand years later, the first European travelers to China would not have been as dazzled as they were by these treatments involving needles nor have given such consideration to the concept of acupuncture. These 16th century travelers coined the word acupuncture from the Latin *acus* (needle) and *pungere* (to puncture), in order to describe to other Europeans the methods used by Chinese doctors. The Chinese word for acupuncture is *zhenjiu*, which translates as “puncture and burn.” This makes clear that moxibustion, which is the warming of the relevant point with smoldering mugwort, was inherent to treatment along with the use of needles. In the historical development of this treatment practice, it is likely that massage of acupuncture points came first, followed by moxibustion and then finally the use of bone or stone needles.

In early China, the application of these healing arts lay in the hands of special healers. At the same time, the massage of acupuncture points for the treatment of day-to-day complaints was always preserved through folk medicine and administered by laymen. The name for this massage became *anmo* in Chinese and *shiatsu* in Japanese. In America, the term *acupressure* developed by keeping most of the Latin word for needle (*acus*) and adding the English word pressure. This term spread in Western culture, even though it is misleading in a way as needles are not actually used in acupressure.



A Yin-Yang Balancing harmonizes mind and body.

In exploring the conjecture about how humans discovered acupuncture, you can find many hints in the animal kingdom. Often, you can observe how animals lick or clean certain places, precisely where known acupuncture points lie.

It is not outside the realm of possibility that Neolithic humans observed this in their animals. Based on this, they may have begun to see how their own experiences coincided with what their animals were doing. Since approximately 500 BC, folk remedies involving the stimulation of acupuncture points via massage, needles, or heat were already being widely practiced on horses, camels, and goats. According to historical records, farmers' sons who served in the military would use their knowledge of these methods very deliberately. Thus, it became a traditional practice for drivers of horse-drawn military vehicles to treat their exhausted steeds with massages and heat on diverse points in order to replenish their power for the next day. This practice of working on specific points was also well known as a treatment for human troops. For this reason, one of the points is known as "Three More Miles on Foot." Troops stimulated this point when

three miles remained before they would come to a village where they could rest, and doing so summoned the reserved strength needed to complete the task.

Many associate the healing arts of China with an aura of secrecy and mystery. This lies partly in past successes healing what seemed to be hopeless cases and also partly in the difficulty scientists have had explaining how acupuncture works within the scope of our existing science.

However, once the Chinese meanings and symbols have been explained, it is simple to understand the underlying principles of this practice, which has its roots in nature. Not only has it existed for thousands of years, it has stayed relevant.

Yin and Yang – The Nature of All Things

Every phenomenon in our world has its opposite. The most straightforward examples of this are day and night, heaven and earth, summer and winter, movement and stillness, and their corresponding characteristics such as light and dark, above and below, warm and cold, and fast and slow. By their very nature, these pairs of opposites depend upon one another, and together they form a whole. Just as the sense of light in all of its nuances allows for the distinction between day and night, so does variety in temperature define the difference between warm and cold days and the seasons.

The Chinese symbolize this division of natural phenomenon into two basic elements using the concept of yin and yang. The corresponding symbol represents two sides of the same hill; one side is shadowed (yin) and the other has light (yang). With this symbol, we can organize every phenomenon in our world, as all possess both a light and a dark side.

The symbol on the horse (see photo [p. 8](#)) further illustrates the interplay of the principles of yin (dark side) and yang (light side). The symbol represents the natural change between day and night, where each retains a bit of the other: the dark section contains a white circle, reminiscent of a night sky with a full moon, while the light side encompasses a dark circle, like a daytime sky where a new moon is still visible.



Yang is associated with upper body parts, while yin is associated with the lower body.

On the horse's body, it is simple to illustrate the organization and interplay of yin and yang. The horse's head, back, and strong limbs are all correlated with yang; basically, all parts that guide the body, carry weight and move. The yin body parts surround the soft underside of the horse, including the chest and the throat. Here, in the shadows, yin-associated organs generate the energy necessary for movement. Together, they build one body.

As the illustration makes clear, the unity of yin and yang is the foundational pattern that can be found in all living things. Chinese medicine diagnoses a patient and his illness based on this principle then determines the necessary course of treatment. The yin and yang aspect of the clinical picture is distinguished based on precise evaluation of additional characteristics. These characteristics are known as the eight principles:

Yin – Internal – Empty – Cold

Yang – External – Full – Heat

With this in mind, the manifestation of an ailment is based upon place of origin in the body, the dynamic of what is happening there, as well as whether the illness gathers cold or heat.

Yang-Based Illnesses

In typical yang illnesses, all symptoms will kick in at once, very rapidly and obviously, as, for example, with laminitis. This illness's clinical picture is associated with the following yang characteristics:

- The location of the illness's action is "external."
- Warm hooves are an illustration of "heat."
- Both the pain, which increases with pressure on the hoof wall, and the presence of a digital pulse, signal heightened activity and energetic "fullness" or excess.

The treatment must, therefore, be based on reducing the abundance of yang: points are treated with needles and allowed to bleed, in order to redirect the "heat" and minimize the "fullness." The success of this method has made it a routine treatment for laminitis in American veterinary clinics, even at those where acupuncture is not otherwise practiced.

Bringing It All Together:

The balance between elements of yin and yang in the body determine overall health. A disturbance of this equilibrium means illness, which must be treated with acupuncture. Acupressure, in turn, supports the balance between yin and yang, which prevents the development of disturbances (illnesses).

Yin-Based Illnesses

In contrast, a yin illness is found in an "inner" location, and will show signs of "cold" and energetic "emptiness" or depletion. These conditions tend to be chronic in nature and affect the inner organs, for example, a long-lasting cough.

- Pale gums and white mucus coming from the nostrils is a sign of inner "cold" in these cases.
- When the horse also tires quickly and sweats easily, that would signal characteristics of inner "emptiness."

Yin illnesses must often be treated over longer periods of time. Often,

moxibustion is used to enhance the stimulation of acupuncture points by warming them with smoldering Chinese herbs.

Important Concepts of Chinese Medicine

When first reading a book about Chinese medicine, you'll encounter many terms that require further explanation. Among them, there are words for the many energetic elements that comprise both overall qi and its many facets, for example, terms such as defensive qi, *zheng qi* and *qing qi*. The most important terms and concepts will be briefly explained in the following pages.

The Organs

Whereas Western medicine conceptualizes the liver, kidney, or spleen as inner organs with concrete locations and physiological functions, Chinese medicine understands the organs as multifaceted, with broad connections and areas of influence. Examples of this belief in action would include an internal organ revealing itself in a sensory organ (i.e. "The liver shows itself in the eyes."); an organ being especially affected by a particular emotion ("Fear damages the kidneys"); and a particular organ being especially vulnerable to certain environmental influences ("Moisture hinders the spleen.").

Because common names for these Chinese concepts include *gan* for liver, *shen* for kidneys and *pi* for spleen, it is possible to understand these terms as body parts in the sense of Western medicine, but also as energetic and psychological influences.

Pain, Heat, Cold, Wind

Pain is the body's warning signal to pay attention to a disturbance (illness).

In Chinese medicine, pain is the consequence of blocked energy. You can, therefore, think of some acupuncture points as "channeling pain out." Their function is to resolve an energy blockage and thereby stop the pain. Other acupuncture points can be thought of as "cooling heat, dispelling wind, or releasing cold." Their function is to trigger the release of forces in the body that can decrease the likelihood of illness, as in Western medicine we might attempt to reduce inflammation or strengthen the body's defenses.

According to Chinese medicine, heat is present in illnesses involving fever. In addition, "inner heat" or "heat in the blood" is believed to cause other illnesses such as inflamed gums or rashes. Cold can only block energy, which brings on pain and lameness.

Wind influences specific symptoms that begin externally but can combine to trigger illness; for example, wind combined with coldness causes a common cold while wind combined with heat causes pneumonia with a high fever.

When one constantly discovers symptoms in new places in the horse's body, for example, itching or alternating lameness, this is often attributed to "inner" wind.

Qi – The Driving Power

Returning to the question of what the stimulation of acupuncture points, whether with needles or pressure, actually does, you must understand a central concept of Chinese medicine and philosophy, specifically, qi.

Energy is the word most commonly used to explain qi. The definition of energy (usable power) only partly explains the meaning behind the Chinese symbol for qi. This symbol is also the symbol for vapors, steam or gas, as well as for "rice grains in a field." Qi represents the invisible, but all-powerful, life force that allows rice grains to germinate.

These diverse interpretations underscore the multi-faceted nature of qi; on the one hand, qi represents something as fine and ever changing as vapor, while on the other hand, something as substantial and material as rice. Qi affects both the ever-shifting power of all living things in nature as well as the heavy energy fields of metal and stone.

All living beings inherit a reserve of qi from their parents, which is the "original" qi or *yuan qi*. This base reserve of qi determines an individual's inherent constitution. The body's ability to absorb qi from the air (known as *qing qi*) and from nutrition (known as *gu qi*), determines one's eventual, acquired constitution.

Through various stages of transformation, the body develops its qi for life function (*zheng qi*) and its defensive qi (*wei qi*), which protects the body from external, illness-inducing influences. In that *wei qi* is responsible for the body's defenses, it is equivalent to the immune system in Western medicine. The task of transforming qi in stages is distributed among the many organ regions.

For the Chinese, qi is an obvious concept that is put into everyday practice as a matter of course. Because qi's effects are self-evident, the Chinese do not feel further interpretation is needed. They speak of the positive or negative qi of a home or a food source, and they think of their own qi as the source of health and longevity. Therefore, grandmothers warn their grandchildren about the dangers of consuming citrus fruits during winter months, as these fruits have a strong, cooling qi. For the same reason, uninformed foreigners will be advised that they should avoid drinking green tea in the winter season.

Such knowledge over the natural characteristics and uses of herbs and food are

an inherent and essential element of Chinese medicine. *Qi-gong*, a term for movement and breathing exercises that literally translates as “working on qi,” is especially popular among older people. *Qi-gong* helps to protect existing qi, increase qi and keep qi moving in harmonious flow.

The uniqueness of Chinese medicine lies in its ability to directly influence the qi of a patient, as an acupuncture needle can give an especially intense “reordering” to the flow of qi in the body. After an illness, stagnant qi, which causes pain, can be removed, or a deficiency in an organ’s qi can be rebalanced. A deficiency of qi will reveal itself with various symptoms. These may include lameness, coughing during movement, tiring quickly, sweating very easily, or continuing to sweat long after activity is over. Indeed, once an illness occurs, the patient’s qi has already been greatly weakened and needles must be applied only with extreme care in order to avoid worsening the condition.

Acupressure makes it possible to balance deficiencies or to stimulate blocked qi using a cautious, mild approach. Acupressure has the advantage that it cannot cause harm. For this reason, the type of acupressure shared here can be used without danger, even on horses that are older or that have been weakened through illness.

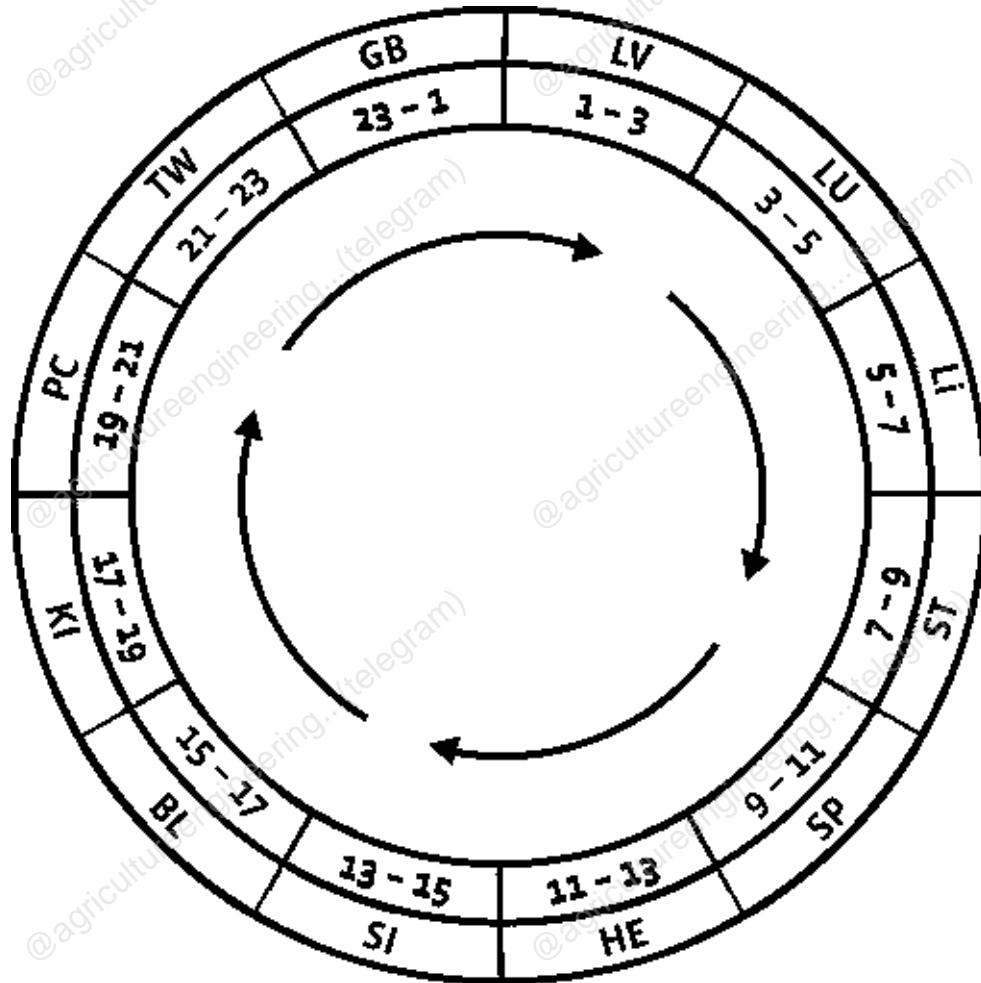
The Channels of Energy

According to Chinese beliefs, qi flows in the bodies of humans and animals through a system of connected main channels and their subsidiaries. These paths are known as *jing luo*. Corresponding Chinese characters symbolically represent these connected routes, which are recognizable like currents in a canal, as well as the function of each channel. The Chinese character accurately translates as “channel” or even “vessel”; however, the Western world has also adopted the term “meridian,” so here these terms will be used interchangeably.

There are 12 main channels, which run near the body’s surface but are also connected to an internal organ. This is why we speak of the “lung meridian” or the “channel of the spleen.” There are six yang and six yin meridians. Yang meridians run primarily along the outer limbs, while yin meridians are predominately internal. The yin channels and their associated organ regions are each connected to a sense organ, which also allows them to have an external “opening.”

The 12 main channels are laid out symmetrically so that each one is available on both the left and right sides of the body. The same goes for the acupuncture points that lie along each one. These points allow access to and influence the energy flow of a particular channel and its corresponding organ region. Points that

are most important for acupuncture are divided into points that invigorate (tone) and points that inhibit (sedate). In addition, there are so-called “source points,” which can strengthen the intended effects of stimulation, and “connecting points,” which carry the balanced energy to the parallel meridian.



The Organ Clock

Because all the channels lie along the limbs, and cross over the joints, blocks in energy flow develop into pain and accompanying lameness.

In a 24-hour cycle, qi flows once through every organ region. The organ clock (see photo) shows when “the wave” comes to a particular organ region and its meridians, filling them to the max with qi. When symptoms of an illness always appear around a particular time, you can draw the conclusion that there is a disturbance in the corresponding organ region.

1. Lung (LU) Meridian

The origin of existence is in the lungs. Its source lies in the breast, at the height of the third rib, hidden by the muscles of the shoulder. From here, the lung meridian runs down an invisible middle line on the inside of the foreleg, to the coronary band, and ends before the digital cushion (photo p. 14).

The Lungs – *Fei*

- The lungs control breathing and qi.
- The lungs control the distribution and storage of qi and moisture in the body.
- The lungs control the flow of liquids.
- The lungs manifest themselves in the horse's coat, mane, and tail.
- The lungs house the corporeal soul (known as *Po*).



Significant Functions of the Lungs

Aside from the digestive organs, the lungs are the most important organ in terms of energy delivery. They take pure qi in from the air and expel impure qi back into the air. The lungs combine pure qi with nutritional qi that the spleen supplies. From there, the lungs combine qi with moisture in the body, nourishing the body's tissues and supporting all life processes. In order to provide the body with protection from illness, qi and moisture are also distributed on the body's surface. The nose is the lung's opening and is especially sensitive to dryness.

The maximum flow of qi flows through the lungs occurs between the hours of 3 and 5 AM.

Reduced energy in the lungs presents as disturbances in the respiratory system, such as colds and coughs. In addition, you may see symptoms of deficiency in the skin or the hair, such as dry skin or a dull coat. Energy blocks in this meridian's flow can also manifest as lameness in the forehand.

Horses that have weakened energy of the lungs will also appear unmotivated at work.

For acupuncture, the most important point is LU 7 (see page 58). LU 7 is found in the foreleg.

2. Large Intestine (LI) Meridian

This start of this meridian is a scarce three-finger width to the inside of the center of the front hoof, on the surface above the coronary band (see photo). From there, it travels upward along the inside of the pastern bones, fetlock joint, and cannon bone. Just before the knee joint, the meridian crosses to the outside and flows over the elbow joint. There, the meridian travels to the front of the area around the point of shoulder. Next, the meridian runs along the underside of the neck, crossing the larynx and the lower jaw. Finally, it ends beneath the nostrils. The meridian's internal binding to the large intestine branches off before the shoulder, going deep within the body.

Large Intestine — *Dachang*

- The large intestine eliminates unusable elements of food.
- The large intestine reabsorbs fluids.
- The large intestine promotes “letting go.”



Significant Functions of the Large Intestine

The large intestine eliminates unusable elements of food and absorbs liquid. Qi peaks in the large intestine and its meridians between 5 and 7 AM.

An energy deficiency in the large intestine can result in digestive disorders as well as skin problems, as detoxification is also a function of normal digestion. There are in fact many additional illnesses that can be associated with this meridian. Among them are lameness of the forehead and inflammation of the jaw and muzzle.

3. Stomach (ST) Meridian

The origin of this meridian is centered just below the eyes (see photo). It flows along the upper jaw to make a loop between the incisors and the first molars, then winds back and crosses the large muscles of the jaw and the temporomandibular joint (TMJ). Then, the meridian runs along the lower neck, down the sides of the chest and along the underside of the belly, about a hand-width from the midline of the body. In the hindquarters, the meridian crosses the crease of the stifle joint, travels over the stifle externally, then downward along the outside front of the hind limb. It ends over the coronary band, one-half to one centimeter to the outside of the middle of the hoof. There are many internal connections to the stomach, both

surrounding the facial area and reaching the stomach itself.

The Stomach — *Wei*

- The stomach controls the reception, fermentation, and maturation of food.
- The stomach controls transport of food's essential components.
- The stomach controls the descent of qi.
- The stomach is the origin of all fluids.



Significant Functions of the Stomach

Together with the spleen, the stomach builds the source of qi that the body generates for itself after birth. In the stomach, food will “ferment and mature.” This lays the foundation for further processing by the spleen and the small intestine. Qi streams at a maximum in the stomach meridian between 7 and 9 AM.

A deficiency in the stomach's energy precedes digestive problems. In following the trajectory of this meridian, disturbances might also emerge as complaints of the eyes, facial muscles and the teeth of the upper jaw. Energy blocks may also present

as lameness in the hind end, especially in the stifle joint.

For acupuncture, the appropriate point is ST 36 (p. 134).

4. Spleen Pancreas (SP) Meridian

This meridian begins at the coronary band in front of the digital cushion of the hind foot (photo p. 18). From there, the channel travels up the inside middle of the leg, over the pastern, cannon bone, hock, gaskin, and stifle. Upon reaching the upper thigh, the channel comes further forward from the middle, and begins traveling along the belly, toward the breast, to the height of the fourth rib. There, the meridian turns and travels backward at about the same height as the horse's point of shoulder. Finally, the channel comes to an end around the location of the fourteenth rib. An inner connection leads to the spleen and then moves upward to the base of the tongue.

Spleen — *Pi*

- The spleen rules over nutrition, both metabolism and transport.
- The spleen controls the blood.
- The spleen controls the limbs.
- The spleen controls the muscles.
- The spleen “keeps things in place.”



Significant Functions of the Spleen

As mentioned in our discussion of the stomach, the spleen transforms food into qi. From the stomach, the spleen receives food that is ready to go, in the form of nutritional qi, and transports it to the lungs. Along with the food, liquids are provided by the stomach, transformed by the spleen and then transported around the body. The spleen takes part in blood formation and in keeping blood in its pathways; therefore, all of the body's organs and tissues are also dependent on the spleen's energy. Because it is responsible for filling the muscles of the body with nutritional energy, the spleen has a direct influence over the power of the horse's limbs.

Mentally, the spleen influences learning, concentration, and memory. The spleen's opening is the mouth and it "shows itself" in the lips. The spleen is sensitive to moisture and wetness. The time of maximum energy for the spleen is between 9 and 11 AM.

If a horse has a lower lip that hangs noticeably, this often indicates a weak spleen. A deficiency of energy in the spleen results in numerous problems, which can be ascribed to poor food conversion. This presents clearly with "hard

keepers,” as well as with digestive issues in general, which can present as diarrhea or colic.

Weakness of the spleen can also be to blame for gynecological disturbances or problems with the muscles or connective tissue. A weak spleen can cause the accumulation of mucus in various parts of the body, including the lungs. Lameness in the hind end or sensitivity in the rib area indicate trouble in this meridian’s flow.

Key acupressure points are SP 6 and SP 21 (p. 138).

5. Heart (HE) Meridian

Originating at the heart, this channel surfaces in the shoulder region, then travels down the inside of the forearm, at the surface (see photo below). Above the knee joint, the channel switches to the outside of the leg and travels downward, behind the outer splint bone. Upon reaching the bulbs of the heel, the line comes forward and ends above the coronary band.

Heart — *Xin*

- The heart houses the spirit.
- The heart controls perspiration.
- The heart governs the blood and controls blood flow.



Significant Functions of the Heart

According to Chinese medicine, the heart takes part in blood formation. In addition, it controls the blood vessels and perspiration. The heart houses the spirit (or *shen*), and in this sense rules over the spiritual, emotional, and psychological self-expression of a living creature. The heart's opening is in the tongue and it is sensitive to heat. The heart's maximum energy hours are between 11 AM and 1 PM.

A disturbance of the heart's energy can cause horses to have spooky reactions and constant restlessness, or cause spontaneous, unexplained sweating. During a treatment, the horse might not want to stand still and this may also be the case for mounting or when in the arena. Problems in this organ cause disruption to the fluidity of a horse's movement and cause lameness in the forehead.

The heart is known as the "King of Organs" and is not often worked upon directly. For this reason, I will not name acupuncture points here.

6. Small Intestine (SI) Meridian

This meridian originates at the outside of the coronary band on the front hoof, a scarce three-finger width from the middle (see photo). The channel travels at the surface, on the outside of the foreleg, toward the front as it moves upward over the pasterns and fetlock joint, to the knee joint. Then, it cuts diagonally across the forearm, to the elbow joint. From here, the line continues along the muscles of the upper arm, over the shoulder blade to the height of the third neck vertebra. From here, the meridian travels over the lower jaw, the upper jaw, and finally reaches an end at the outer base of the ear. Because one of this meridian's deepest inner branches is in line with the withers, there is also a connection between the small intestine and the withers. Other branches reach the eyes and inner ear.

Small Intestine — *Xiaoshang*

- The small intestine receives and metabolizes.
- The small intestine separates liquids.
- The small intestine enhances judgement.



Significant Functions of the Small Intestine

In the small intestine, food and water that has been digested by the stomach and spleen is divided into “pure” and “impure.” The pure is kept for the body to use, while the impure is transported for elimination. This meridian’s energy is at a maximum between 1 and 3 PM.

Disrupted energy in the small intestine causes digestion problems like diarrhea, as well as excessive mucus in the trachea or inflammation of the eyes. Complaints associated with this meridian also include forehead lameness and insufficient throughness at the poll when ridden.

Point SI 3 (p. 142) applies to acupressure for the small intestine.

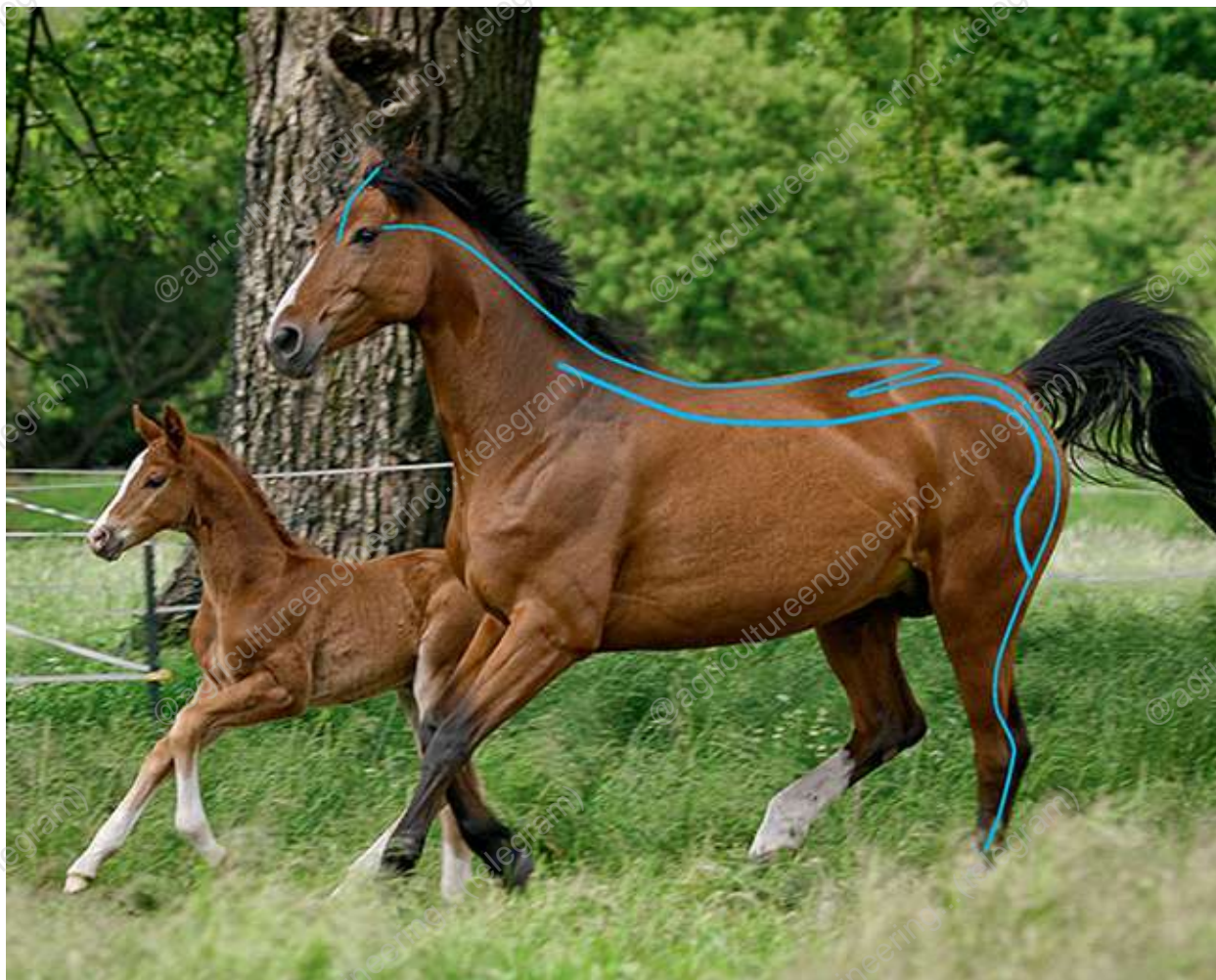
7. Bladder (BL) Meridian

The point of origin for this meridian is at the inner corner of the eye, in a small hollow in the bone (see photo p. 22). From here, it travels over the forehead, past the ear on the inside, over the crown and poll. Then it runs along the side of the

neck, beneath the roots of the mane. The channel edges the shoulder blade, then splits into two branches. The inner branch travels parallel to the spine, about a hand-width away, until it reaches the croup. The second branch is yet another hand-width farther from the spine, at about the line where the upper ribs are connected. Once in line with the fourth vertebra of the sacrum, the inner branch makes a zigzag, once to the front and once to the back, then once again runs parallel along the sacral vertebrae, backward and downward. Where the stifle hollows, this branch joins up with the second stem, which has run parallel up to the fourth sacral vertebra. The channel, now unified, continues downward, along the middle of the back of the hind leg. It travels to the superficial digital flexor tendon, staying to the outside and the back; on the way, it crosses the outside of the hock. This meridian ends above the coronary band, in front of the bulbs of the heel. Its inner connections include the kidneys and bladder.

Bladder — *Pangguan*

- Think of the bladder as a district manager. It stores liquids, then uses qi's transformative power to distribute them.



Significant Functions of the Bladder

In Chinese medicine, the bladder not only stores and eliminates urine but also transforms liquids into urine, a function that Western medicine ascribes to the kidneys. The highest energy hour for the bladder meridian is between 3 and 5 PM.

As this channel travels areas of the horse's body that are often extremely stressed, such as the poll, back, croup, and hindquarters, it is important to note that many complaints in these areas are caused by energy blocks in the bladder meridian. Bladder blockages are often triggered by cold.

For acupressure points, use BL 1, BL 10 and BL 60 (pp. 91, 139, and 141).

8. Kidney (KI) Meridian

The kidney meridian's starting point is at the apex of the frog on the hind foot (see photo). From there, it runs upward between the bulbs of the heel, then along the inside of the superficial digital flexor tendon. Running clockwise, the meridian

circles the inside of the hock, traveling upward along the backside of the internal surface of the gaskin. From the fold of the stifle, the channel moves along the inside of the upper thigh, in the direction of the belly. About three fingers-width to the side of the midline of the belly, the line crosses over the belly and breast regions, traveling between the front legs to the chest. There, it ends in a dip between the apex of the breastbone and the base of the first ribs.

The Kidneys — *Shen*

- The kidneys store the essence of qi.
- The kidneys regulate birth, growth, reproduction, and development.
- The kidneys govern water in the body.
- The kidneys receive qi.
- The kidneys control the Gate of Vitality.



Significant Functions of the Kidney

In addition to their role as an excretory organ, Chinese medicine ascribes the kidneys a wider sphere of influence than Western medicine does. The kidneys store the remaining life energy of the older animal, and control the development process of the foal in regards to bone growth and reproductive maturity. They also perform the tasks of receiving qi sent down from the lungs and of providing the body with warmth.

Anxiety in a horse is a sign of weak kidney energy, as is sparse hair growth of the mane and tail. The ears are the opening of the kidneys. Kidneys are sensitive to cold. The hour of maximum energy is between 5 and 7 PM.

Disturbances in kidney energy can manifest as problems with growth or reproduction, frequent onset of illness or chronic coughing. The hindquarters, and most especially the hock, are most vulnerable to blocked energy along this meridian's path. A blockage can lead to lameness or stiff movement.

KI 3 is a very important point for strengthening the energy of the kidneys through acupressure (p. 54).

9. Pericardium (PC) Meridian

Originating at the organ after which it is named, the pericardium meridian starts on the surface, at the height of the fifth rib, across from the inside of the elbow joint (see photo). Traveling the middle of the inside of the foreleg, it runs downward behind the chestnut, then over the back edge of the knee joint and the flexor tendon. The meridian flows to the dip between the bulbs of the heel, where it ends.

Pericardium — *Xinbao*

- The pericardium oversees the heart.
- The pericardium protects the heart.
- The pericardium protects the spirit.



Significant Functions of the Pericardium

According to Chinese medicine, the pericardium is the heart's protector. As such, it takes part in all tasks of the heart, strengthening its function. As mentioned earlier, disturbances of the heart are seldom treated directly; in fact, they are most often addressed using points along the pericardium meridian.

The maximum energy hours for this meridian are between 7 and 9 PM. Disturbances in energy of this organ usually appear similar to those associated with the heart. Sweating in the stall long after exercise is the most common example leading to treatment of this meridian. Blocks in the energy flow can also lead to lameness in the forehead. There are no specific points recommended for use in acupuncture.

10. Triple Warmer (TW) Meridian

The beginning of this meridian is approximately half to one centimeter to the outside of the imaginary midline of the front hoof, above the coronary band (see photo). Traveling up the side of the foreleg, toward the front, this meridian crosses over the pastern, fetlock joint, and cannon bone. It moves toward the middle of the

knee and the forearm. Continuing over the elbow and shoulder joint, the channel then turns over the edge of the shoulder blade at the height of the spinous processes of the thoracic vertebrae. It continues along the side of the neck to the head, crossing the temple and the corner of the eye to reach the base of the inner ear.

Triple Warmer (TW) — *San Jiao*

- TW activates the source of qi.
- TW monitors the transport and permeation of qi.
- TW monitors the waterways and distribution of fluids.



Significant Functions of the Triple Warmer

The name of this organ is based on a principle of Chinese medicine, which identifies three areas of heat within the body: the upper, middle, and lower. On a

horse's body, this would be divided as the chest cavity, the upper abdomen, and the lower abdomen. The triple warmer is the primary regulator of organs in these areas of the body. Its maximum energy hours are between 9 and 11 PM.

Energy blockages in this meridian can be observed as balancing issues in the neck and poll (the head tilts to one side) or as lameness in the front end.

For acupuncture, no points are recommended.

11. Gallbladder (GB) Meridian

The gallbladder meridian is long and runs along the side of the horse's body (see photo p. 26). Beginning in the outer corner of the eye, it runs up the side of the forehead toward the inside of the base of the ear, then over the occipital protuberance (bone of the poll), where it turns to the side. The channel crosses over the atlas vertebra before traveling downward along the upper neck. Crossing the front edge of the shoulder blade, it moves along the chest wall before winding upward and back to the last rib. Next, it moves toward the area of the hip joint, then finally down along the middle of the outer flesh of the hind leg. The channel ends a tight three-finger width to the outside of the midline of the hind foot, over the coronary band.

Gallbladder — *Da*

- The gallbladder rules over bile.
- The gallbladder controls decision making.
- The gallbladder monitors tendons.



Significant Functions of the Gallbladder

Even though horses do not have gallbladders, Chinese medicine considers this organ's influence to be present. Its role involves supplying the tendons with qi, to ensure their movement and flexibility.

An important psychological aspect associated with a fully functioning gallbladder is the ability to make decisions and put these decisions into action. The maximum time for gallbladder energy is between 11 PM and 1 AM.

Disturbances in energy here will show themselves particularly when a horse lacks determination or lacks coordination for more difficult movement sequences. Frequent stumbling or dragging the hind end over jumps indicate energy deficiencies in this area. Important body parts such as the poll and the hip joint lie along this channel. Therefore, a blockage in the gallbladder meridian can cause insufficient "throughness" at the poll, failure to develop thrust from behind, or difficulties with shifting weight back onto the hind end. For acupuncture, use the points GB 20 and GB 41 (pp. 135–36).

12. Liver (LV) Meridian

This meridian begins a scarce three-finger width to the inside of the midline of the hind hoof, above the inner coronary band (see photo). It runs upward, on the inside of the leg, toward the front pastern, fetlock joint and cannon bone; then, over the hock and stifle joints. After passing over the inside of the upper thigh, it travels

deeper within the body, then appears outwardly again at the base of the last rib. It runs externally from there, stopping at the fourteenth rib.

The Liver — *Gan*

- The liver stores blood.
- The liver ensures a smooth flow of *qi*.
- The liver monitors the tendons and manifests in the hooves.
- The liver's opening is the eyes.
- The liver houses the ethereal soul (known as *Hun*).



Significant Functions of the Liver

The liver stores the blood and is tasked with ensuring that all muscles get enough blood during activity, and thereby enough energy to endure the activity. It influences the tendons and ligaments, but also the hooves. The liver is responsible for the harmonious distribution of *qi* to the entire animal. This includes the trouble-free

function of the other organs as well as the free flow of emotions. The eyes are the opening of the liver. The liver is sensitive to wind. Its most important energy hours are between 1 and 3 AM.

Disruptions in this organ's energy present outwardly in many different ways. Some examples include problems around tendons or joints, poor hoof quality, or diseases of the eye. Likewise, a horse that is oversensitive during grooming and tacking can be having problems here. When a horse suddenly begins to demonstrate strong resistance to the rider, this can be especially indicative of problems along the liver meridian.

For acupuncture, LV 3 is the suggested point (p. 52).

The following meridians are not laid out in pairs and have exceptional characteristics, so they are not classified among the ordinary meridians. Therefore, they are known as extraordinary channels or the “marvelous meridians.”

The acupuncture points that lie on these meridians are especially valuable for working on mental stability and also to encourage a horse to become more submissive.

13. The Governing Vessel (GV) – *Du Mai*

This channel begins in the depression above the anus, under the tail (see photo p. 29). It runs along the underside of the tail to the tip, then over the top side from tail to head. On its way, it follows the midline over the sacrum, then the vertebrae of the loin, back, and neck. Continuing over the occipital bone (poll), forehead, and face, it flows to its end, between the nostrils. The governing vessel regulates the body's yang energy.

The points identified for acupuncture are referred to as GV 26 and *Yintang* (p. 88).

The Governing Vessel — *Du Mai*

- The ocean of yang.



14. The Conception Vessel (CV) – *Ren Mai*

This begins between the anus and the exterior genitals of the horse, then follows the midline of the belly, chest, and the underside of the neck (see photo [p. 29](#)). It is flowing toward a faint depression directly under the middle of the bottom lip. The conception vessel regulates the body's yin energy.

For Acupressure, CV 24 is the suggested point ([p. 88](#)).

The Conception Vessel — *Ren Mai*

- The ocean of yin.



15. The Belt Vessel – *Dai Mai*

This channel consists of a “belt” circling from the rump, around the flank, in front of the point of hip and then under the belly in front of the navel (see photo). This meridian is crossed by all others running from front to back or from back to front. A blocked-up belt vessel can altogether diminish a horse’s ability to move with “throughness.” The activity of the hindquarters simply cannot be carried forward.

The energy flow in the belt vessel can be stimulated using acupuncture point GB 41 (p. 136).

The Belt Vessel — *Dai Mai*

- The belt vessel is responsible for allowing the horse to move “through” from the hindquarters.



Teachings of the Five Elements: A Guide to the Right Points

The Chinese world view recognizes the course of nature, especially its constantly changing phenomena. This means that all living things are influenced by, and must adapt to, the diverse, constantly changing forces in their environment. This includes everything from seasonal weather changes to the content and quality of your nutrition to emotional stress.

The purpose of the Teachings of the Five Elements (called the “Five Changes” in Chinese) is to capture and describe how these happenings affect your health. With this tool, a veterinarian practicing acupuncture can extract the most important hints from a patient’s clinical picture and medical history, helping to identify the

source of pathological disturbance. Because the type and character of the horse can be easily determined using the Five Elements, I will explain the basis of this theory a bit further here. This will make it possible for you to easily categorize your horse's type, which is the key to choosing the right acupuncture points for your horse.

The Five Elements and Their Most Important Associations

	WOOD	FIRE	EARTH	METAL	WATER
YIN-Organs:	Liver	Heart	Spleen	Lungs	Kidneys
YANG-Organs:	Gallbladder	Small Intestine	Stomach	Large Intestine	Bladder
Sensory Organs:	Eyes	Tongue	Lips	Nose	Ears
Tissues:	Tendons	Vascular	Flesh	Skin	Bones
Emotional Actions:	Rage	Joy	Worry	Sadness	Fear
Outward Expressions:	Yelling	Laughter	Singing	Crying	Groaning
Developmental Stage:	Birth	Growth	Transformation	Harvest	Storage
YIN-YANG	Little YANG	Potent YANG	In Between	Little YIN	Potent YIN
Directions:	East	South	Central	West	North
Seasons:	Spring	Summer	(Late Summer)	Fall	Winter
Times of Day:	Morning	Noon	Afternoon	Evening	Night
Climate Influence:	Wind	Heat	Moisture	Dryness	Cold
Colors:	Green	Red	Yellow	White	Black
Scents:	Rancid	Burnt	Aromatic	Metallic	Rotten
Tastes:	Sour	Bitter	Sweet (Neutral)	Pungent	Salty

Consider the Five Elements not as a literal description of nature's components, but rather as symbolic of passages and changes. The five unique manifestations of nature each have their own inherent properties and states, which are depicted as follows:

- Water moistens downward.
- Fire strikes upward.
- Wood can bend and return to its original shape.
- Metal can be formed and hardened.

- The earth allows planting, growth, and harvesting.

That which saturates and descends (water) is salty; that which strikes upward (fire) is bitter. If it can bend and quickly return to its original shape (metal), it is pungent. When something can be planted, grown, and harvested (earth), it will be sweet.

The Five Elements are further classified by direction:

Wood moves in outer directions. Metal embodies contracting movements. Water is directed downward, while fire is directed upward. Earth represents stability.

Further counterparts associated with each element, with emphasis on their medical significance, are listed in the chart on page 31.

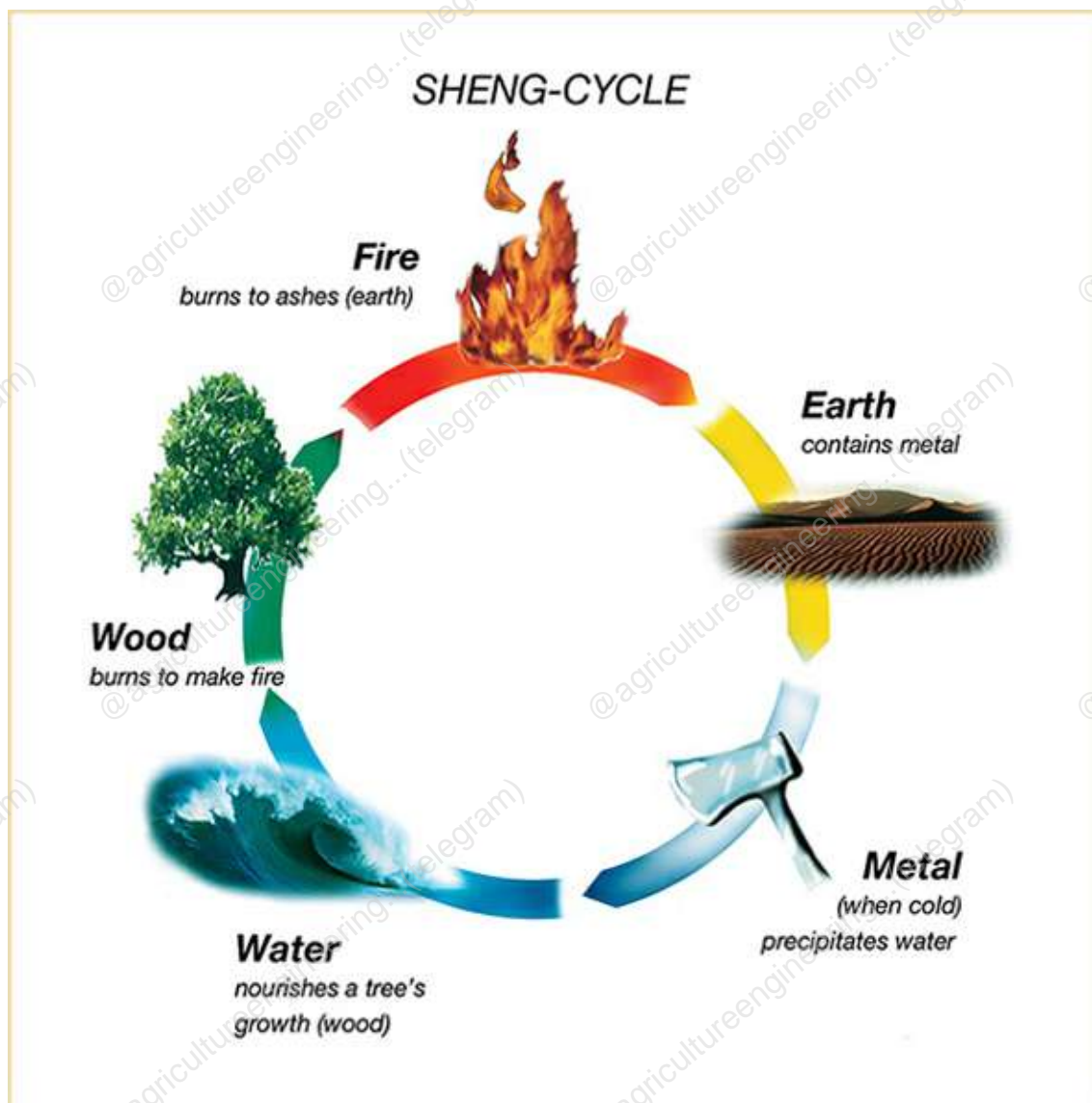
Each of the Five Elements influences the others both by promoting (*sheng* = generating) and by controlling (*ko* = suppressing). The following representation of the two cycles clarifies these relationships.

In the *sheng*-cycle (p. 33), the elements support one another as follows:

Water nourishes a tree's growth (wood).
Wood is burned to make fire.
Fire burns to ashes (earth).
Earth contains metal.
Metal (when cold) precipitates water.

In the *ko*-cycle (p. 34), the elements keep one another in check in the following ways:

Wood enters the earth (as tree roots) and extracts its nourishment.



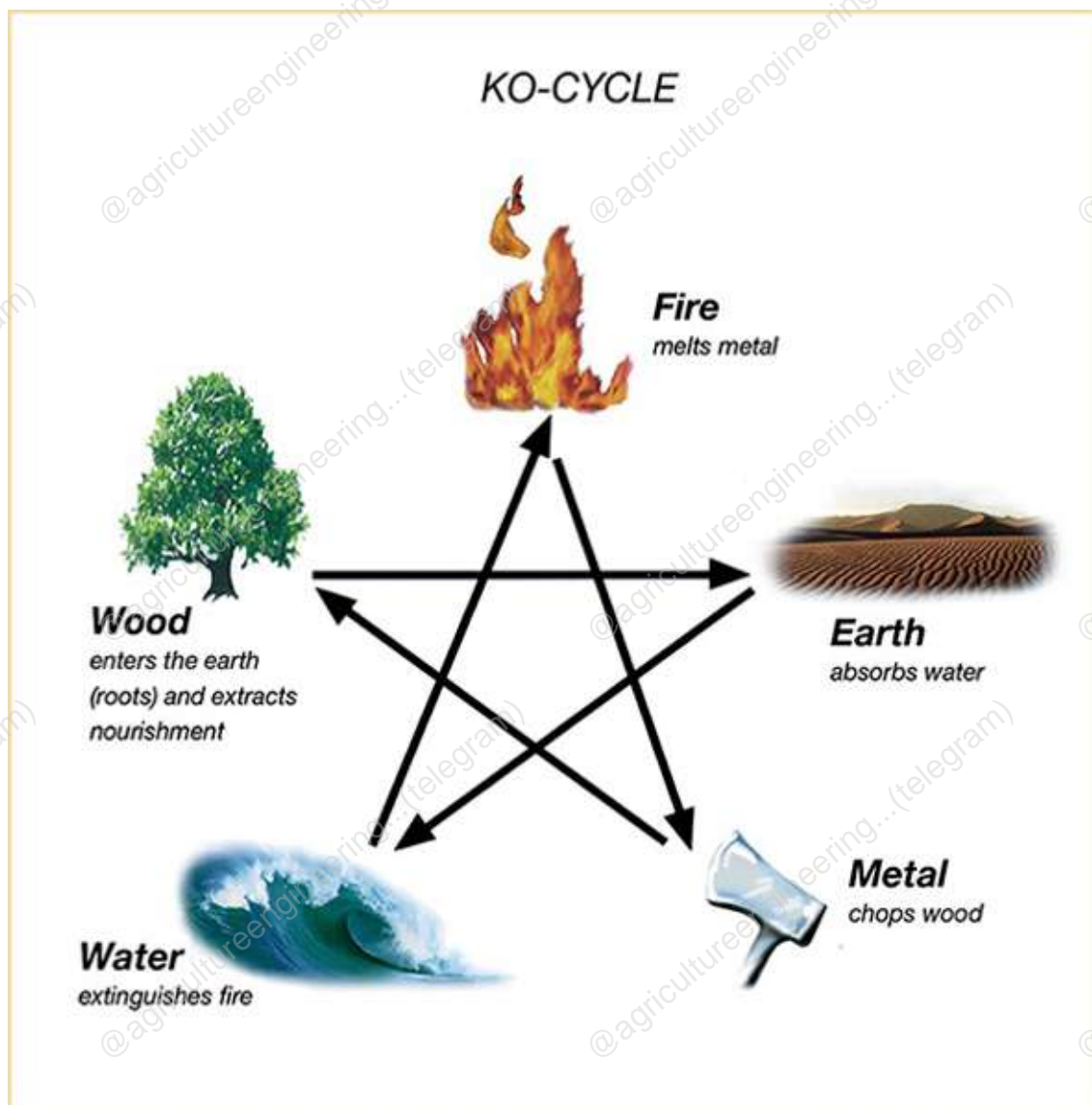
Fire melts metal.
Earth absorbs water.
Metal (picture an ax) cuts wood.
Water extinguishes fire.

In order to maintain balance, the elements work together in both cycles; at one time, each element promotes and is promoted, suppresses the others, and is suppressed itself.

Every element is associated with two organ regions, and Chinese medicine considers these organs a pair (see illustration on p. 35).

For a veterinarian who practices traditional Chinese medicine, the Five Element's relationship network is especially important and helpful when seeking a source of illness. We will take a look at how the treatment for a cough is

determined, as this example lends itself particularly well to illustrating this point.

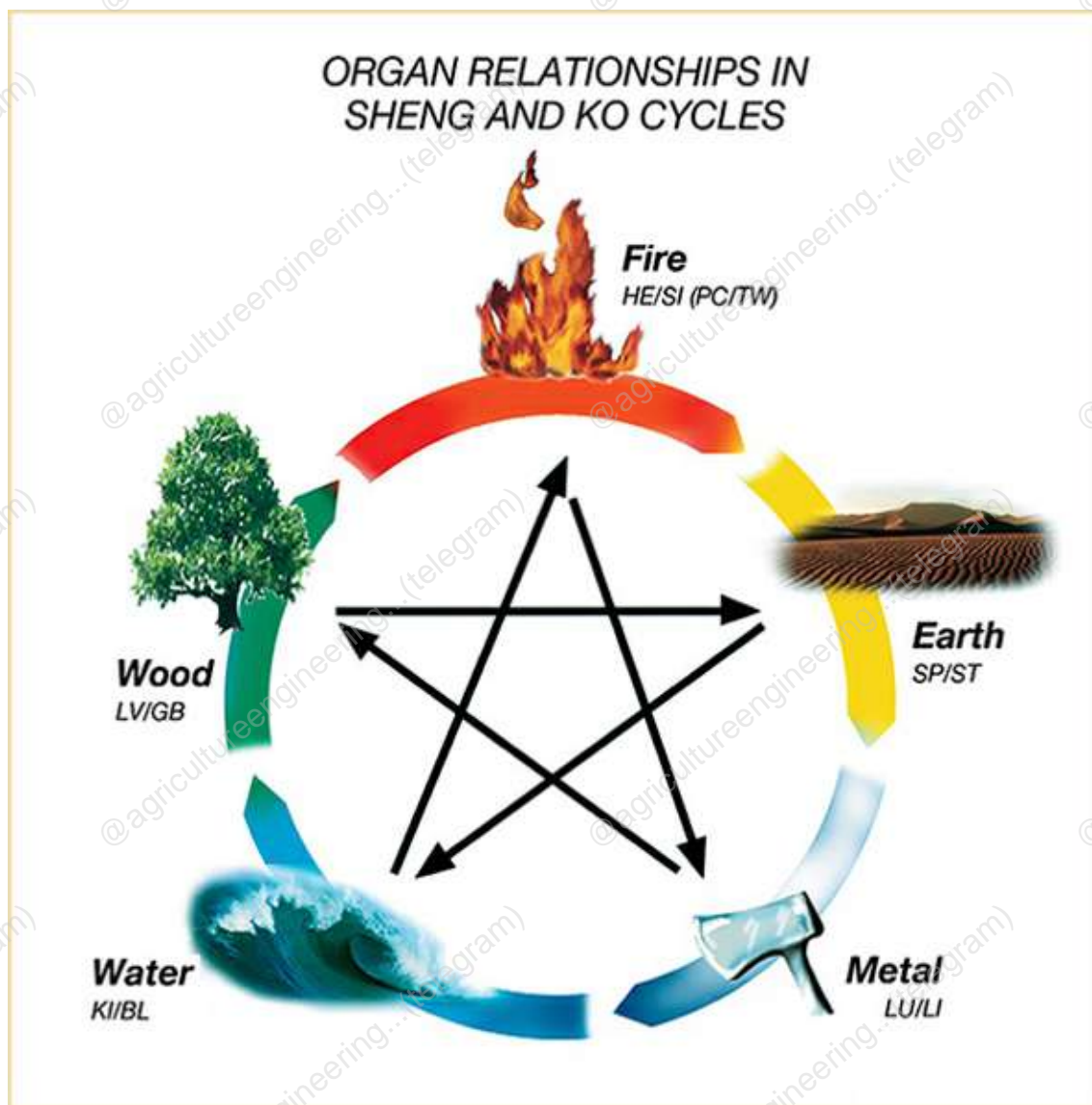


Selecting the Right Acupressure Points

When a horse is being treated for a cough, acupuncture points located away from the lungs are often selected. The acupuncturist is then asked, “What organs do these points belong to?” He or she is likely to answer, “The spleen.” Or, “The kidneys.” Then, when treating another horse for a cough, the same acupuncturist may insert needles into the second horse at completely different points.

What determines the choice of points? At the beginning of a treatment, the practitioner will first ask many detailed questions, looking to discover whether the horse has a tendency toward certain illnesses and if certain weather conditions enhance or minimize the likelihood of onset. Character, temperament, behavior in

the herd, and position in the herd's hierarchy are also considered. Sweating patterns, mane, coat, and hoofs should be examined as well as the mouth, tongue, eyes, and pulse. Finally, different acupuncture points will be tested for sensitivity. Based on the findings, it is determined which element is deficient or overabundant compared to the others. From this, you can make the important decision about a course of treatment.



Certainly, the lungs (element: metal) are often the place where symptoms, in this case coughing, show up. However, with a chronic cough, the source of the energy breakdown is likely to be in the area of earth or water elements. Therefore, the explanation will be found in the *sheng*, or generating cycle. In this cycle earth bears metal, and if the earth is weak, it will not provide metal with enough support.



The small, dominate liver type (gan type) directs his annoyance toward the steady, laid-back spleen type (pi type).

In practice, one often encounters horses that develop full, deep-sounding coughs that worsen during wet, damp weather. According to the Chinese concept of organ function, the spleen (element: earth) is responsible for circulating moisture within the body. If the spleen itself is bothered by wet weather, it will become less effective. At that point, moisture will collect in the lungs, thickening mucus. This hampers the lungs from performing their function, which is sending qi down the body. There is a blockage, which causes coughing.

It is also possible that the kidneys (element: water) are weak and unable to receive the qi that the lungs are sending down. In this case, there will also be a blockage of energy in the lungs, but with coughing that sounds dry and forced. In the first case, the core of the treatment is to strengthen the earth elements. In the second instance, it would instead be important to strengthen the water element; otherwise, the metal element will remain weak.

Depending on these findings, the important treatment points will be selected. Chronic coughing is caused by an energy disruption that lies deep; therefore, it will require acupuncture treatment, which can be supported by acupressure.

Circumstances can also indirectly affect the lungs, causing coughing. To determine the cause of disruption, it is important to perform a detailed investigation into a horse's specific characteristics. If it happens that a horse with a hard, hacking cough also has a tendency to be resistant and explosive, it may be that an overactive liver (wood) has taken over the spleen (earth) through the *ko* cycle. In turn, the spleen is prevented from supporting the lungs (metal) in the course of the *sheng* cycle.

Here, the signs of emotional imbalance help to determine that overactive energy of the liver is causing the cough. Calming the heightened liver energy will lead to recovery.

To support a horse's constitution using acupressure, one must next determine its body constitution type. There are five horse types: *gan*, or liver type; *pi*, or spleen type; *shen*, or kidney type; *xin*, or heart type; *fei*, or lung type. When deciding a horse's type, it can be useful to refer to the expressions of the Five Elements as a guide (see chart [p. 31](#)).



Based on character, behavior, and physical build, you can determine a horse's constitution type.

Horse Types for Acupressure



Every Horse Is Unique

Anyone who has contact with a horse can perform acupressure, as long as the person is prepared to engage with the horse calmly and without hurry.

When you enter a barn, the horses react in different ways. A precocious horse looks curiously over his stall door, perhaps whinnying for a treat. In another stall, the horse looks unfriendly: he pins his ears, tosses his head, and seems annoyed. Then, there's a horse who seems sad. He turns away slowly in his stall, wanting nothing to do with a visitor. While the situation is the same, the behavior of each horse differs significantly.

In acupressure treatment, accurate assessment of a horse's behavior is very important to the selection and application of acupressure points. Therefore, I will first describe familiar horse types, which should be useful to the layperson. In most cases, the reader will recognize his horse in the descriptions. If that does not happen, the reader must connect with an acupuncturist, who can use her experience to assign a type.

A type is assigned based not only on the behavior of a horse, but also on its body type and the behavior of its tongue. Every horse owner knows of a horse that allows its tongue to be pulled from its mouth with ever-increasing pleasure and enjoys having its tongue played with. Among these horses, the tongue is often relatively large and soft. Other horses object vehemently the moment you try to take hold of the tongue. This horse will slurp his small, short tongue out of the hand right away. Often, the tongue is of a firm consistency.

Looking closely at a horse's body, you will come across those with strongly pronounced joints and large hooves, many of whom have a tendency toward stocking up. Through exercise, their legs will slim down, but the next day, often depending on the weather, they will be stocked up again. Other horses have relatively small joints and feet and never stock up. Some horses regularly get sick in the winter; others in early spring. In order to really determine a horse's body constitution type, you must observe and pull together all of its characteristics; then allow for all of them to influence the determination of a horse's type.

Five Major Horse Types

- *Gan*, or Liver Type
- *Shen*, or Kidney Type
- *Pi*, or Spleen Type

- *Xin*, or Heart Type
- *Fei*, or Lung Type

Among the five common horse types, the layperson will have an easy time recognizing three:

- *Gan*, or Liver Type
- *Shen*, or Kidney Type
- *Pi*, or Spleen Type

In order to distinguish the *xin* (chin), or heart type and the *fei*, or lung type, it is often necessary to conduct a pulse diagnosis. An experienced acupuncturist can then identify the horse's type. With the exception of heart types, all horse types can be supported psychologically by applying acupressure at points specific to their types. Naturally, some horses are also combination types; for example, a horse could have some characteristics of *gan* type and some of *pi* type.



Dann, an imposing, five-year-old Friesian stallion, is a shen type. His anxiety at the beginning of his training was greatly reduced because of

a trusting relationship with his rider.

Identifying a horse's type does not mean he is ill. Rather, doing so highlights his inherent characteristics and possible idiosyncrasies. It is important to always pay attention to a horse's character traits, as Chinese medicine does not divide mind and body. A *gan* type can only perform with excellence when he is not constantly annoyed. A *shen* type will always try to do exactly what the rider is asking, so the rider must constantly pay attention to soundness and strive to increase the horse's self-confidence. The *pi* type is reliable, but lazy, and must be very well-conditioned in order to perform.

The following horse types can be found in all breeds. For example, a Friesian is not necessarily a *pi* type, just because he looks big and solid; in fact, Friesians can also be *gan*, *shen*, *pi* and *xin* types.

The *Gan*, or Liver Type



The *gan* type clearly shows his annoyance.

The *gan* type is a dominant horse. In the herd, he will take on the position of

leader. If he can't do so without a fight, skirmishes will ensue, some of which may lead to injury. He is not fearful, but courageous, and can get very annoyed. Germans have an old expression: "There's something eating at my liver," which implies that the speaker is very irritable. This horse embodies this expression, and we also meet people like this!

The strength of this horse type is not considered negative. They are excellent performers, when they cooperate.

These are often the gorgeous, impressive horses who are successful at the show grounds. As they often demonstrate resistance, these horses tend toward muscular tension. This horse's chin is often hard and tight. A *gan* type can develop tense muscles, even just from feeling annoyed 24 hours a day at his neighbor in the barn.

This especially applies to mares. Therefore, you must ensure a peaceful environment.

Liver types quickly notice their riders' weaknesses and use them to their advantage. Consistent training is vital.

The *Gan* Type at a Glance

- Transformation Phase - Wood
- Dominant in the herd
- Expressive
- Athletic
- Annoyed easily
- Uses rider error to own advantage
- Tends toward muscle tension
- Tight mouth
- Red mucus membranes
- Taut, wiry pulse

Disharmony

The *gan* type is not weak, but is courageous and untimidated. Because of his character, he does not usually need to be encouraged so much as balanced. According to Chinese medicine, the *gan* type's irritability can be the source of blocked qi in the *gan*, or liver. This causes muscular tension, which often manifests in the horse's back.

Working with a liver type always requires much skill on the rider's part. On the one hand, the horse must submit, accepting the rider's aids; on the other hand, this

horse will rebel against unfair or “nagging” punishment.

According to Chinese medicine, these horses are susceptible to so-called outer-wind illnesses. This means they will have a tendency toward infections of the respiratory tract in springtime and can be bothered by chronic conjunctivitis in the eyes.

The *Shen*, or Kidney Type

The horse of the *shen* type is most often eager and a quick learner, but is a somewhat fearful horse. This horse can become overwhelmed easily and then gets confused about what is being asked of him.

Anything new will be exciting, and he will acknowledge that with an excited snort and often with a flight reaction. He sees changes in his familiar environment, be they in the arena or on a trail he knows well, as insurmountable obstacles. These horses are happy to depend on a calm lead horse, following willingly on a trail or past an unfamiliar object. Praise and calming words help to build his self-confidence.

Shen type horses are not dominant and they get along well with other horses in the herd. When changing barns, you must pay close attention to ensure this horse has settled in well with the new herd. He can easily get picked on or become an outcast.

These horses get cold easily. In winter, they are susceptible to the onset of infections, which have a tendency to become chronic conditions.

Shen types have a small, hard tongue, which they do not like to have touched. The chin is often short and small. The voice is not deep, but instead reminds one of a foal’s whinny. The *shen* type is very people-oriented. If this horse trusts his rider, he will greet her with a friendly whinny.

Shen types learn quickly. Because this horse always wishes to please his rider, he can become overeager. He often confuses his training elements, offering a movement before he has really received the rider’s aids. This overzealousness must not be punished, but instead the correct response should be fostered through repetition and ample praise.



The shen type is fearful and overeager. Once Gipsy has learned how to bow, she offers to do so constantly, even when she is not asked.



Marengo is a shen type. He has a little chin, whitish mucus membranes, and a weak pulse. He has a low place in the herd. When ridden, he used to panic and become out of control. Today, he has learned to trust himself more and is ridden without a problem.

The Shen Type at a Glance

- Transformation Phase - Water
- Low place in the herd
- Lacks self-confidence
- Develops through the rider's praise
- Fearful
- Overzealous
- Gets cold easily
- Fast learner
- Small chin
- Small joints
- Immature-sounding voice
- Tendency toward respiratory ailments in winter
- Small tongue, whitish mucus membranes

- Weak pulse

Disharmony

For humans and horses, the psyche has a big influence over the immune system. The *shen* type tends toward nervousness. If he is overwhelmed physically or mentally, especially as a young horse, respiratory or skeletal problems can result.

The *shen* type gets cold easily and therefore tends toward bronchitis in late fall and winter. Therefore, this type is often given acupuncture in the fall, with the intention of strengthening his immune system and avoiding respiratory infections.

A *shen* type horse can hardly cope if he is a target within the herd and being bullied. If you purchase a yearling or two year-old, it's especially important to observe how he adjusts to his new environment; otherwise, discord here can be the basis for later problems. The idea that he must "fight his way through" or "just work it out" with others never applies to the *shen* type.

When ridden, this horse often has difficulties of the mouth, which are exasperated by pain caused by tooth eruption.



The shen type's tongue is small, hard, and difficult to take hold of.

The *Pi*, or Spleen Type

The *pi* type is a calm, trustworthy horse. Not much bothers him. Because of his quiet disposition, this is the perfect beginner horse. He is not generally that motivated to perform. He learns slowly, but once he understands what to do, he is very consistent. Often, this type of horse is lazy at the start of a ride, but will get more willing after he is warmed up.

His muscles feel soft and this horse has a tendency toward edema (excess of watery fluid) of the legs. With exercise, his legs will appear thin, but the following morning are again “stocked up.” In Chinese medicine, the spleen is tasked with “keeping things in their place.” If the spleen cannot do this, liquid collects in the connective tissue and the result is swollen legs. The lower lip can sometimes hang loosely. This horse’s tongue is big and soft. The horse will enjoy having his tongue pulled from his mouth.



Just by looking at Queeny, it's clear she's a pi type.



The pi type's tongue is large, soft, wet, and easy to pull out of the mouth.



Liostro is a pi type. He has a limp tongue, frequently stocks up and is sluggish when ridden. Very slowly, he mastered dressage movements through 4th Level, and is now incredibly consistent at these movements. While his greatest passion is eating, he does wake up and get quite fresh at the beach.

The Pi Type at a Glance

- Transformation Phase – Earth
- Trustworthy horse
- Balanced
- Perfect beginner horse
- Lazy at the onset of work
- Slow learner
- Confidently executes familiar tasks
- Soft muscles
- Tendency to stock up in the legs
- Tendency toward hay belly
- Hanging lower lip, soft tongue
- Slow, full pulse

Disharmony

If mentally or physically overtaxed, the *pi* type's stoicism can worsen his inclination toward laziness. These horses retreat inwardly, reacting ever-less enthusiastically to the rider's aids.

The even-keeled, peaceful temperament of *pi* types is often confused with stubbornness, which riders often attempt to remedy with rough treatment. At times like this, it is often forgotten that these are the horses that frequently provide a sense of security to fearful riders. When the *pi* type understands a task, he will complete it 100 percent of the time. In contrast to a *gan* type, who will take advantage of his rider's weaknesses, the *pi* type neatly completes a task even when the rider's aids are unsure.

With optimal training and careful conditioning, the *pi* type can become a reliable competition horse.

The *Xin* (Chin), or Heart Type

The *xin* type is generally a quiet horse when handled. This behavior changes quickly, however, in the form of a sudden, excited state that can build to a point of hysteria. A heart type will sometimes be confused with a *shen* type. However, the *shen* type is a generally anxious horse who becomes quieter over time with praise and an effort to increase his self-confidence. The *xin* type is not anxious; he can simply be unreasonable at times.

The beliefs of Chinese medicine ascribe the heart as responsible for controlling the mind and the spirit. If it's not managing successfully, one might, for example, see a case of epileptic seizures. The *xin* type will get very upset about things, which often seem incomprehensible to the rider. Today it's the arena door, tomorrow the water hose; the next day it's loading in the trailer. At times like these, they do not get irritated like the *gan* type and they also do not allow themselves to be reassured like the *shen* type. The sweating pattern of the *xin* type is such that they are often dry when being cooled out, but then begin to sweat again afterward, back in the stall.

The acupuncturist identifies a *xin* type through diagnosis of the tongue and pulse. Unfortunately, acupressure does not influence the heart type, but he does respond very well to acupuncture.

The *Xin* Type at a Glance

- Transformative Phase – Fire
- Fixates on one other herd member
- Stubbornness associated with sudden hysteria
- Excitement, panic
- Sweating long after exercise
- Bluish tongue
- Surging pulse



Leonas is a successful Grand Prix horse. He is generally solid but as a xin horse he can startle suddenly and get anxious. At the same time, he often sweats all over his body. "The spirit lives in the heart, so the heart controls the spirit," says Chinese medicine. Following acupuncture, Leonas' sweating patterns became more typical and he handled the demands of competition better.

The *Fei*, or Lung Type

The *fei* type is associated with the transformation phase of metal.

The *fei* type is a reliable horse. If you only consider his build, he will not often

be seen as a show horse, the way the *gan* type usually is. The build of a lung type's body is characterized by dryness: dry, clear joints; quiet eyes; muscles in need of development. You will find this type of horse in any sport, but especially in eventing where his intelligence and level-headedness are in demand for going cross-country.

These horses stand out for their even, willing temperaments. In contrast to the nervous *shen* type, easily-aggravated *gan* type and lathered-up *xin* types, the lung type does not tend to get overexcited. Every day, they come out of their stalls routinely and work with you consistently.

The lung type approaches anything new with caution. He does not become anxious, but rather will wait-and-see in a self-confident manner. The *fei* type excels in work and demonstrates superior work ethic.



At first, the fei type seems unremarkable. Only when he begins work will his enormous potential become clear.

Fei types find their place within the herd. For most, a change in herd will not pose a major problem, in contrast to the *shen* type. As a rule, they acclimate to new

environments quickly. Here, too, you will notice their intelligence and level-headedness.

The mucus membranes of the lung type are whitish-pink and tend toward dryness. The tongue can easily be pulled from the mouth; however, unlike the *pi* type, who enjoys having his tongue handled, the *fei* type will be relieved when you let go of his tongue.

The *fei* type is a functional, sociable horse. To ensure long-term use, he should be conditioned slowly. It is especially important to pay attention to the education and strengthening of his muscles. Hopefully, the rider recognizes the inherent work ethic and intelligence of her *fei* type horse. If the rider resists the urge to pressure him and instead praises his efforts, she will not find a better horse.

The *Fei* Type at a Glance

- Transformation phase metal
- A dependable horse
- Confident, thoughtful
- Extremely willing to work
- Intelligent
- Muscles require development
- Tends toward illness when stressed
- Respiratory and skin problems
- Dry mucus membranes
- Superficial pulse

Disharmony

Because the *fei* type is thoughtful and strives to do his best, he cannot easily handle constant subordination and suppression. In this situation, the *fei* type will not actively resist the rider like the *gan* type, nor will he develop extreme anxiety like the *shen* type or become stubborn like the *pi* type. With the *fei* type, one will not so much see a decrease in cooperation at work, but instead will see physical symptoms that emerge as illnesses of the skin or lungs.



When going cross-country, the fei type demonstrates level-headedness and willingness to work.

Such illnesses often present with dry, flakey skin accompanied by hair loss.

Traditional Chinese teachings identify the lungs as the home of the corporeal soul, *Po*. The *Po* is influenced by emotions such as grief and sorrow. If such feelings arise, the corporeal soul is constricted. The lung *qi* is harmed and respiration is impeded.



Through his willingness at work and affection for his rider, the fei type triumphs over beauty and charisma.

Horses of the *fei* type tend toward quick and shallow breaths. Respiratory illnesses often present with dry cough or shortness of breath.

Acupressure Points to Mentally Balance Each Horse Type



Choosing the Acupuncture Points

In order to apply acupressure optimally, the horse owner should at first consult with an experienced acupuncture practitioner who can examine the horse and determine if there is in fact an energy imbalance and what to do about it. Influencing the disharmony associated with each horse type is accomplished using acupuncture points that affect the psyche.

Of course, each acupuncture point has more than just one effect! For example, the point Stomach 36, *Zusanli*, can remedy loss of appetite; however, it can also strengthen the immune system. Liver 3, *Taichong*, works to quiet the psyche, but can also relieve muscle tension. Therefore, one point can be used to address more than one problem. Most often, points must be combined with one another in order to achieve optimal treatment. Next, we'll describe four acupressure points, all of which not only affect the horse's body, but can also support mental stability for the horse types with which they are associated.



*Points of the psyche are always found on the legs.
Front: LU 7
Hind: SP 6, KI 3, LV 3*

Liver 3 (LV 3) *Taichong* – The Great Surge

Effects:

- Supports liver yang
- Drives the stream of liver energy
- Has calming effects on impatient, aggressive horses
- Diminishes stress-related tension
- Relieves spasms and cramps in the digestive system
- Alleviates conjunctivitis in the eyes

Location

- Inside the hind leg
- Beneath the hock
- Behind the tip of the splint bone



Explanation:

According to Chinese beliefs, the main task of the liver (*gan*) is to ensure the smooth flow of qi (the energy flowing through the meridians). Therefore, the liver influences every function in the body.

Liver qi can never be weak, but can definitely become blocked. Because of this, the *gan* can often get backed up and full, which has both physical and emotional effects. Emotionally, this full back-up can appear as overall tension, irritability, and anger (“There’s something eating at my liver!”). This psychological reaction can amplify to muscle tension or to stress-related stomach pain (“I am so tense, I feel sick!”) If this cycle isn’t broken, it will just perpetuate. LV 3 is an important point in that it can influence this fullness and blockage, harmonizing the liver qi.

Application:

Emotional problems are the most common source of a liver qi blockage. Therefore, horses of the *gan* type tend to react to the demands of mounted work with irritability and muscle tension. Likewise, should a *gan* type not approve of the

horse in the next stall, he will have reactions such as ear-pinning, snaking of the head, and kicking out with the hind legs. A horse that has been getting increasingly irritated at his neighbor for hours will certainly not appear balanced and happy when it's time to ride, nor is he likely to comply easily with new requests. Of course, horses in this state of mind also have increased muscular tension.

The *taichong* point is excellent for harmonizing the *gan qi* through acupressure. In response to any of the *gan* type's over-the-top psychological reactions, this point can be used for treatment in combination with a Yin-Yang Balancing (see "The Practice," p. 87). Naturally, this horse's environment must also be optimized.

Again note that inflammation of the eyes can also be positively influenced through LV 3.

Patient Example:

May, an eight-year-old mare, was brought in for examination. In the prior season, she had competed successfully at Second Level dressage. Over the last three months, the owner had begun to school flying-lead changes. May understood the aids very quickly, at first. However, as they worked toward perfecting the changes, the mare became tight in her back muscles and began resisting the rider's aids.

At the same time that the problems began under saddle, trouble started on the ground. When the owner would enter the stall to catch May, the mare would spin, turning her hind end toward the owner. At that point, the owner tried to punish the mare, which only served to worsen rather than help resolve the situation.



A Yin-Yang Balancing harmonizes the body and spirit.



LV 3, taichong, quiets the irritable horse.



Large Intestine 4 (LI 4), hegu, is a very effective point for neutralizing pain.



Gallbladder 20 (GB 20), fengchi, relieves pain and channels wind outward.

May is a liver type. She has always learned quickly, but also will react with resistance should a rider give incorrect aids or if an exercise is repeated too often. Her rider was a very experienced horse trainer and had come to terms with the mare's irritability, especially because May showed no fear at competitions and went beautifully around the arena. In the prior year, the rider had reacted to May's resistance by briefly backing off with her demands.

This time, however, the rider decided the mare should be "old enough to behave herself under pressure." But, a liver type remains a liver type for life. In this case, a *gan qi* blockage developed, which appeared as muscle tension in the back.



When she cooperates, May is a “rock star” at competitions!

May underwent acupuncture and was symptom-free 10 days later at a post-examination. She did not require a second acupuncture treatment.

To further the positive effects of the treatment, the rider applied acupressure to points LV 3, GB 20 and LI 4 for another 14 days. The mare became increasingly more mentally balanced and willing toward work, allowing the season to go on successfully.

Kidney 3 (KI 3)

Taixi – The Great Creek

Effects:

- Supports the flow of kidney qi
- Strengthens weak kidneys, whether they lack yin or yang
- Treats pain in the lumbar and stifle regions
- Helps with problems of the sexual organs

Location

- Inside the hind leg
- Between the hock and tibia (gaskin)



Explanation:

In Chinese medicine, the kidneys, or *shen*, are viewed as the basis for all life processes. *Shen* is responsible for birth, growth, and reproduction. If the *shen* are strong, the horse can perform for a long time without problems. With weak kidneys, a horse will fatigue quickly and get sick easily.

Fear is the psychological attribute associated with the kidneys. (“I’m so scared, I’m about to wet my pants!”) Fear and stress work side by side on our immune system. If weak kidneys are not able to absorb the lung qi, for example, the horse will develop respiratory problems.



As a shen type, Lucy requires acupressure treatment to increase her self-confidence.

The point *taixi* animates kidney qi, thereby supporting our life energy. Blockages in the kidney meridian, which show up externally as pain, can be resolved. For problems in the genital region (for example, infertility), acupuncture can be applied at point KI 3 in combination with other points. This is also the premier point accessed to increase a horse's self-confidence.

Patient Example:

Lucy, a five-year-old mare, changed barns four weeks ago. At her former stable, she was turned out to pasture for six hours a day, in the company of other horses, and felt great. As the new horse in her current herd, she has been picked on badly and excluded. After a short time of this, she began spooking badly when ridden out.

“Lucy is a sweet, peaceful, and fearful horse,” says her owner. Unfortunately, the barn change and negative pressure in the herd really undermined her self-confidence. After a consultation with me, the owner began daily acupressure at

points KI 3 and Yin-Yang Balancing.

After a week, Lucy's behavior when ridden was significantly better, but within the herd, the situation remained unchanged. This indicated that Lucy's energy disturbance went deep and required a stronger treatment, so we applied acupuncture. How exciting to get this update three days later: "Lucy has really acclimated to her new herd! She's found a friend and can now move about the pasture without getting harassed."

Spleen Pancreas 6 (SP 6) *Sanyinjiao* – Intersection of the Three Yins

Effects:

- Tones the spleen
- Eliminates moisture
- Meeting point of the spleen, liver and kidney meridians; supporting the flow of qi in all three channels
- Nourishes blood and yin
- Quiets the spirit
- Relieves pain
- Influences gynecological pain

Location

- Inside the hind leg
- Above the hock



Explanation:

The spleen, also known as *pi*, can be described as our “internal center” or “inner equilibrium.” The spleen is at the center of qi building. Horses of the spleen type tend toward stocked-up legs or edema of the belly (hanging belly). Their musculature tends to be soft and they often have a hanging lower lip. They learn slowly, but once they understand something, they do not forget. SP 6 helps with moisture in the spleen meridian, which can resolve stocking up. When the three yin meridians are supported, the horse will be livelier.



The pi type often has a hanging lower lip.

Laziness at the beginning of the ride will not last as long or may disappear completely.



LI 4, hegu, has a draining action. Hegu is an influential point for pain.



Small Intestine 3 (SI 3) houxi, works especially well on muscles and tendons.



Stomach 36 (ST 36), zusanli, moves moisture and influences stocked-up legs.

Patient Example:

Maron, an eight-year-old gelding, had regularly recurring episodes of stocked-up hind legs. His general condition and rideability were excellent. His owner used acupressure three times a week at points LI 4, SI 3, ST 36, and SP 6. After five weeks, his legs were back to normal.



Maron's rider appreciates the even temperament of her pi type!

This is a rare example of a mild meridian blockage that could be treated with acupressure alone. Most of the time, there is a deeper energy block that must first be treated with acupuncture.

Bringing It All Together:

All four of the points described have a multifaceted sphere of influence. To support the corresponding horse type, acupressure can be applied to these points at any time.

Lung 7 (LU 7) Lique – Broken Sequence

Effects:

- Support the lungs in distributing and delivering the lung qi
- Moves defensive qi

- Forms a functional crossover with the large intestine
- Opens the conception vessel (an extraordinary meridian)
- Opens the nose and helps with allergies
- Regulates moisture in the skin and protects against viral and bacterial infections

Location:

- Inside the front leg.
- A hand-width above the knee joint, on the front edge of the radius bone.



Explanation:

According to Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM), the lungs monitor the skin, beneath which the defensive qi, also known as *wei qi*, flows. The immune system is comprised of *wei qi* and, in the early stages of infection, it can be strengthened through point LU 7. Among horses with chronic coughs, LU 7 helps to send the lung

qi downward to the kidneys. In turn, the kidneys regulate the qi of the entire body and can be supported by KI 3.

The ever-willing *fei* type will never refuse to work. In order to maintain soundness, the rider must pay attention to this character trait and plan adequate down time for her horse. LU 7 helps the *fei* type to build up his immune system.

Acupressure should be applied to this point at least once per week, even when the *fei* type appears energetic and full of vitality.

Example:

In October, I was introduced to Florit, an eight-year-old eventer. The gelding had a successful summer competing at Novice Level eventing. However, at his last two competitions, he had refused a jump cross-country and brought down several rails in the stadium jumping phase. Based on this, the owner had Florit examined by his veterinarian, as she suspected pain might be causing the performance issues. Neither the clinical exam nor the accompanying blood work revealed any pathological issues, so Florit was referred over to me.

The worried owner had no explanation for Florit's behavior. Upon inquiry, I learned that Florit had been competing every single weekend. Additionally, the rider trained with two different instructors, so Florit never got a day off, not even the Monday after competitions. Florit is a *fei* type – he works confidently, attentively, and quietly. But, for his type, his pulse was too weak.

On his body, I could identify small, walnut-sized, bald spots where the skin was dry and flaky. The rider had noticed an increasing number of these spots in the last six weeks. Because the changes to the skin did not seem to be itchy, she didn't worry about it.

According to TCM, both the changes to the skin and Florit's behavior were hints as to how exhausted the horse really was.

The therapy consisted of three acupuncture treatments and the prescription of Chinese herbs aiming to strengthen Florit's immune system and generate qi and *xue* (blood). The owner applied acupressure at LU 7 daily for 14 days and only worked Florit lightly. He got a day off each week when the pair simply took a walk together.

In October, the team competed successfully at an event, after which Florit was reexamined. He had worked enthusiastically and his pulse was normal. Had Florit not received treatment, he would have eventually become ill because of overwork.

Florit received one final acupuncture treatment. Going forward, the owner continued to apply acupressure at LU 7 once a week. In addition, Florit now has at least one day a week off and is only going to competitions every other week. The rider understood that Florit had pushed passed his body's limitations to please her,

and that it was her responsibility going forward to ensure that this intelligent, willing, *fei* type horse would not be overworked.



Florit is a fei type, who will always try to do exactly what his rider asks.

The Application of Acupressure



At a Glance: All of the Acupressure Points Described in This Book



Yin-Yang Balancing: *Yintang, Renzhong, Chengjiang* Page 88

Bladder 1 (BL 1) *Jingming* Page 90

Gallbladder 20 (GB 20) *Fengchi* Page 135

Bladder 10 (BL 10) *Tianzhu* Page 139

Large Intestine 16 (LI 16) *Jugu* Page 139

Lungs 7 (LU 7) *Lieque* Page 58, 133

Large Intestine 4 (LI 4) *Hegu* Page 137

Small Intestine 3 (SI 3) *Houxi* Page 142

Spleen Pancreas 21 (SP 21) *Dabao* Page 138

Spleen Pancreas 6 (SP 6) *Sanyinjiao* Page 56

Kidney 3 (KI 3) *Taixi* Page 54

Liver 3 (LV 3) *Taichong* Page 52

Stomach 36 (ST 36) *Zusanli* Page 134

Bladder 60 (BL 60) *Kunlun* Page 141

Gallbladder 41 (GB 41) *Zulinqi* Page 136

Preparation

Before every acupressure application, the rider or horse owner should ask herself what the goal is. For example, if a horse has appeared unbalanced in recent days or weeks, an acupressure treatment can restore his mental stability.

Our horse is a herd animal. New experiences can fuel his insecurities. Therefore, it always makes sense to apply acupressure as a preventative when a horse is going to have a change in environment, such as a new stable, long-distance travel, or an intense ride. Three days before the anticipated change, you can begin acupressure with a Yin-Yang Balancing (see “The Practice,” p. 87) as well as at the points associated with your horse’s general type.

In the case of a physical problem, consulting with an acupuncturist is advisable. Acupressure itself cannot cure, but can support any and every other type of therapy.

It’s important to practice acupressure in an environment that is not too hectic. Naturally, you can demonstrate to friends how acupressure is applied. However, the best results will occur when you concentrate completely on the horse.



Acupressure can only be effective when the energy between rider and horse is harmonious.

Don't try to apply acupressure when you're tired or nervous, after a stressful day, or unsettling experience at the barn. When a rider hurries into a stall, approaches the horse quickly and applies acupressure, she is more likely to experience resistance toward the treatment rather than achieve relaxation. Therefore, I'll suggest a few practices that can be used before attempting acupressure. These exercises can help you balance your own energy as much as possible before working on your horse:

- Stand quietly and relax all of your muscles, including the muscles of your face.
- Concentrate on yourself for a moment, breathing deeply in and out two or three times. It helps to gather energy in the dantian (located a palm-width below your navel) and to place your hands there as you breathe.
- Now, rub your hands together to generate warmth.
- Next, use your right hand to stroke the back of your left hand ten times.
- Rub your hands again and then distribute the warmth, using the left hand over the back of the right hand this time. Doing this activates your energy, your qi.

You should never apply acupressure with cold hands.

- Beginning at your left wrist, use your right fist to gently bump the inside of your left arm, working up toward the left shoulder. This practice activates the yin meridians of the lungs, heart, and pericardium.
- When you reach shoulder-height, move your fist to the outside of the arm and continue the gentle knocking back down the arm to the wrist. This animates the yang meridians of the small and large intestines and the triple warmer.
- When you've finished, repeat the process, using your left fist on your right arm this time.
- Rub the palms of your hands together one last time, then quietly begin acupressure.

A reminder that before you begin an actual treatment, it is crucial to determine your horse's type.

Acupressure is not as intensive as acupuncture, making it especially important to know if a horse needs to be calmed or stimulated through treatment. A *shen* (kidney) type is a nervous horse, so you normally relax him with your voice. However, when using Chinese medicine, this horse would need to be stimulated using point KI 3 to increase kidney qi, thus developing his self-confidence and overcoming his fears. In contrast, a *gan* (liver) type becomes annoyed easily and tends toward muscular tension; he can be balanced using point LV 3.

For acupressure to be applied successfully, the handler must know the precise location and function of the acupressure points.

Bringing It All Together:

- Clarify personal goals
- Ensure a peaceful environment
- Relax and prepare yourself
- Determine your horse's type
- Know the location and function of acupressure points

Examination

Looking Over the Horse

Before anything happens, take a good look at the horse but don't touch him yet. The

overall impression is important. Does the horse look happy and healthy or does he come across as undernourished and unbalanced? Hold this first impression in your mind as you observe your horse, considering each of the following points in the order they are given.

Weight: Too lean? Of good weight? Fat?

Coat quality: Smooth, shiny, dull, thick? Is there general hair loss or hair loss in places? (If hair loss is only in places, determine whether the spots lie along a meridian.)

Joints and feet: In relation to his body, does the horse have small or large joints and feet? If joints show enlargement: location and type of swelling (soft? hard?). Is the consistency of the hooves brittle, hard, cracking?

Lower lip: Hanging or held in place?

Muscles of the muzzle: Loose or tight?

Ears: Attentively directed forward, pinned back, or relaxed out to the side?

Eyes: Wide-awake and open or sleepily half-closed?

Body conformation: Well-composed or can you recognize problematic conformation, such as a neck set high combined with a weak back? Do you see asymmetries, such as a crooked pelvis or shifting weight off a foreleg?

Musculature: Does the horse have athletic muscling or do his muscles appear low in tone and/or not very distinctive? Is there one area of the body where the muscles are especially built up?

Tail: Is the tail held straight out or tight to the body? Does it hang limply from the body or is it held rigidly?

Movement: Can the horse turn and spin or does he seem stiff and immobile?

Behavior: Excited, fearful, fresh, uninterested, aloof? Interested in his environment? Behavior with other horses? Any recent changes in behavior? What do these look like?

An observer is more likely to form an accurate overall impression when the horse can move uninhibited during the assessment, for example, in his pasture or stall. This way, the horse's behavior in his herd or with his stablemates can also be noted.

It's important to continually observe your horse, keeping an open mind. A healthy horse should have a sleek coat, seem awake but trusting, and appear well-nourished.

Even small changes from this healthy condition should be noticed and addressed, before true illness has the chance to set in.

Palpating the Horse

Once the observer has formed an initial visual impression, it is time to palpate the horse, scanning his body with touch. First, allow the horse to sniff your hands and in doing so, make physical contact with him. Under no circumstance should you touch the horse's back first! Most horses will react with fear and either drop through the back or spring to the side.

After greeting the horse, stroke the neck, back, and croup. If the horse reacts negatively, take a couple of steps away from him, standing quietly until he turns toward you again. Only then resume the scan. With acupuncture, you can't be in a hurry!



Initiating contact quietly and carefully is the basis for building a trusting relationship.

Distinguishing Warm and Cold

Palpation begins at the withers. Using the back of the hand (*not* the palm), the assessor should stroke her horse with both hands. In this way, cool and warm areas of the body can be determined. Generally, the legs are cooler than the rest of the

body. The limbs of the *pi* type often appear stocked up and feel as warm as the rest of the body. *Shen* types more often feel cool to the touch and also get cold more easily than other types.

If it's difficult to make a determination, a comparison to another horse can be helpful. By marking off warm and cool areas of the skin, you can later determine whether they lie in the area of a particular meridian.

Musculature

The condition of the horse's musculature can be examined using the *palm* side of the hand. *Pi* types most often have soft muscles. The muscles of a *gan* type have a firmer consistency. It's important to determine if certain groups of muscles are much weaker or stronger on one side of the horse than the other. When such inconsistencies are found, the next step is to test whether there is noticeable warmth or pain to the touch in these areas. It is also important to pay attention to whether these areas lie in the path of a certain meridian.



Large Intestine 16 (LI 16), Jugu, is used for both examination and

therapy.

The Back

The back is examined from the shoulder blade and withers back to the base of the tail. Alongside the vertebrae, the palms stroke only with light, steady pressure. If too much or too little pressure is applied suddenly, every horse will find that uncomfortable.

If you find a definable muscle region to be painful, you must next conduct a Shu-Point Examination (see p. 77). A common case of mildly tight muscles can be treated for a week using the acupressure points outlined in the section “The Practice,” p. 87. If there is no improvement after a week, you will need to speak with a veterinarian or acupuncturist.

Muscular tension can originate for many different reasons. A badly fitting saddle can cause chronic pain. A minor or undetected lameness can cause a backache. For example, a show jumper has a strong aversion to oxers — it’s likely caused by his fear of landing because his legs hurt somewhere. Naturally, this horse braces through his back as a result, and the back muscles tense up. If only the back is treated in a case like this, the horse’s physical improvement will not last long. The cause of the tense back muscles is pain in his legs, which must first be diagnosed with conventional medicine and addressed. Then, the back can be treated.

Neck and Poll

Stand on the left side of the horse and lay your right hand on the withers. Where the neck is set into the shoulder, place your left hand over the *brachiocephalicus muscle* and use your thumb to press deeply on point LI 16, *jugu* (see p. 84). This point is used both for diagnostics and therapy. As with all points used for diagnostics, *jugu* must be examined on both sides of the body.

If there is tension in the lower neck, the horse will toss his head to show he’s unhappy with the touch or nip at the examining hand. Pain at this point can develop when there is a disturbance in the large intestine meridian, which runs from the front hooves up and around to the nostrils (see p. 15).



Gallbladder 20 (GB 20), Fengchi



Bladder 10 (BL 10), Tianzhu

There are two more points to check out in the neck region. GB 20, *fengchi*, is sensitive to the touch when there is pain and tension in the poll. The same goes for BL 10, *tianzhu*, but in this case, the sensitivity points toward tension deep in the muscles of the back, indicating blockages in the bladder meridian.

Horses that do not show any discomfort when these points are examined do not have tension in the neck and poll areas.

Muzzle and Tongue

The muzzle and opening of the mouth should already have been closely considered and will now also be palpated. In addition, we assess the tongue's behavior. To accomplish this, the tongue does not need to be pulled from the mouth completely.

The *pi* type's muzzle is soft and usually large. The lips are relaxed. It's easy to pull the tongue from the mouth. The tongue is very wet, large, and soft. With a *gan* type, the lips and muscles of the mouth are more commonly tight. Pulling out the tongue causes an annoyed, resistant reaction. The tongue is of a firm consistency.

The *shen* type is fearful when you take hold of the tongue. The muzzle and mouth are often small. The tongue is small and difficult to grasp. The mucus

membranes appear whitish in color.

Examining the Extraordinary Meridians – *Dai Mai* (The Belt Vessel)

An extraordinary meridian, the belt vessel or *dai mai*, runs in between the forehead and the hindquarters. A jam in this meridian blocks the flow of qi from hind end to front and the other way around.

At every body scan, the *dai mai* must be examined. Lay the right hand on the point of hip. Pull your fingertips toward the front of the horse. Arching your hand slightly, allow your fingertips to exert a light pressure on the upper edge of the abdominal wall. If there's a blockage, the *dai mai* is sensitive to pressure and the horse will react by moving away, looking annoyed or lifting a hind leg.



The mouth of a pi type



The pi type enjoys having his tongue taken hold of.



The shen type has a pale tongue and does not like having it grasped.



The mouth of a gan type is tense, the lips held together tightly.



To examine the dai mai on the left side, establish contact with the horse by laying your left hand on his abdominal wall. Rest your right hand on the point of the hip. By moving the fingertips of your right hand toward the horse's head, check out the belt vessel.

A blockage in the belt vessel can be resolved using the point GB 41, *zulinqi*. In acupuncture, this practice is described as “opening the *dai mai*.” Each extraordinary meridian has an opening to one of the 12 ordinary meridians. *Zulinqi* is the belt vessel’s opening. Acupressure should be applied there for 30 to 60 seconds. The point lies to the outside of the hind leg, under the hock (see description on [p. 136](#)). After applying acupressure, the belt vessel should be examined again. If you have really found GB 41, the *dai mai* will no longer be sensitive to pressure. If you have not achieved this result, repeat the procedure.

Testing and, if necessary, opening the *dai mai* should take place at the start of every treatment.

Bringing It All Together:

- Make physical contact with the horse.
- Use the back of your hands to feel the horse, distinguishing warm and cool areas.
- Use the palm of your hands to determine the horse’s muscle quality.
- Examine the back muscles.

- Examine the neck and poll.
- Check out the muzzle and behavior of the tongue.
- Open the belt vessel, *dai mai*.

Organizing Your Observations

After the rider has observed and palpated her horse using the techniques described, she can determine the horse's type. If the rider cannot make a determination, an acupuncturist can help. This by no means implies that a horse necessarily requires treatment! But, by understanding her horse's type, a rider becomes more patient with performance problems common to that type and also can react more quickly should disharmony occur.

When considering her horse, the rider should not forget that she too has established patterns of behavior. If a *gan* type horse is paired up with a *gan* type human, there is a high probability of conflict. Therefore, serious self-assessment is also necessary.

When the horse presents with tense muscles, the following *shu* points should be examined. Otherwise, acupressure can be applied for up to 10 days (as described in the section "The Practice," p. 87). At that point, if there is not a clear improvement, speak with your veterinarian or acupuncturist.

Important: Examining the *shu* points according to the following descriptions can be quite challenging for someone just beginning with acupressure. Hands-on application is best learned through an acupressure course. However, everyone should be clear on the theoretical meaning behind these points. The rider who simply wants to support her horse energetically and is not experiencing any serious problems in handling or riding really does not need to access the *shu* points. Instead, she should focus on the treatment options described in the section "The Practice."



Gallbladder 41 (GB 41), zulinqi, opens the belt vessel.

The *Shu* Points

As his neck and back were stroked, the horse got used to the touch. The examiner has already determined how sensitive to touch the horse is and also put a halter on the horse before examining the *shu* points. Either a helper can hold the horse with a long lead rope, or the horse can be tied with a long lead. It's important to pay attention to the facial expressions and ear activity as the *shu* points are examined.



The shu points lie along the bladder meridian. Here, the shu points for acupressure are shown.

For acupressure, the examination begins with the back. These acupuncture points are not exclusively used for treatment, but can also help with detecting when illness has set in. Pain or illness can influence the flow of the meridians.

Through experience with Chinese medicine, I've seen that certain acupuncture points will become sensitive to pressure as soon as there is a disruption of meridian or organ. These points include the *mu*, or alarm points, which become painful when there is a blockage. To a degree, these points are difficult for the layperson to find.

Another possibility exists for discovering a blocked meridian – palpating the *shu* points. These points are sometimes referred to as points of association or agreement. Twelve of these points are most important. These lie on the inside of the bladder meridian, along the back, and are named after their associated meridians and functional systems. So, for example, the *shu* point for the liver meridian can be referred to as *gan shu*, or *shu* point of the liver, or by its location along the bladder meridian, BL 18.

Although all *shu* points lie along the bladder meridian, each has a close relationship with its own meridian and that meridian's function. A point will be

sensitive upon examination as soon as there is a disruption to its organ's energy or its meridian. For example, the *gan shu* point will be painful when the liver's energy is disturbed and/or when the liver meridian is blocked.

In acupuncture, *shu* points are used for therapy and inserted with needles. They are therefore considered not only diagnostic points, but also therapeutic points.

In the following section, I have made an effort to describe the *shu* points: how to find them and their diagnostic value. Having said that, experience has shown that attending an acupressure course is really the best way to learn how to conduct an examination of the *shu* points.

Locations and Meanings of the Shu Points

The *shu* points lie about a hand-width from the spine, deep in the muscles of the back.

A *shu* point becomes sensitive to touch when its associated meridian is blocked. A lameness or muscle tension indicates a blockage in an outer meridian. A *shu* point will also react when there is an internal illness, meaning the disturbance is in an inner meridian. In the second case, you must pay attention to symptoms such as fever, breathing problems, signs of colic, etc. Inner disturbances must be treated by a veterinarian or acupuncturist.



Here's how you locate the shu point of the lungs, fei shu/BL 13: The

pointer finger of the right hand finds the first shu point, BL 13, behind the shoulder blade.

BL 13 – Fei Shu

This is the agreement point of the lungs meridian, which runs along the inside of the front leg. When there is lameness in the forehand, this point may react sensitively to pressure. This sensitivity can, however, also hint toward a problem in the organs of the respiratory system. Especially with acute respiratory system infections, *fei shu* is painful to the touch.

The point *fei shu* lies behind the shoulder blade, in the eighth rib's intercostal space (space between the ribs).

BL 14 – Jueyin Shu

BL 14 is the point associated with the pericardium (sac around the heart). This meridian runs in the foreleg.

The point lies between the ninth and tenth ribs.

BL 15 – Xin Shu

Though the agreement point of the heart is associated with the heart meridian, it runs down the front leg anyway. According to Chinese thought, the heart shelters the spirit and the thoughts. If the heart does not have sufficient control over the spirit, it could cause, for example, epilepsy. *Xin shu* is reactive among horses that have experienced extreme psychological stress.

The point lies between the tenth and eleventh ribs.

BL 18 – Gan Shu

This is a very significant *shu* point. The agreement point of the liver can become sensitive when hind end lameness is present, as the liver meridian runs along the inside of the hind leg. The liver regulates the free flow of qi and is responsible for all the muscles and tendons. Therefore, sensitivity to pressure on the *gan shu* often indicates muscular tension.

The point lies in the intercostal space of the fourteenth rib (see photo at the bottom of [p. 75](#)).

BL 19 – Dan Shu

Horses do not have gallbladders. They do still have a gallbladder meridian, which runs from above the hip joint down along the outside of the hind leg. Sensitivity at this agreement point indicates hind end lameness. Often, the hip joint is affected.

The gallbladder meridian is often disturbed when trotting. Movement problems, such as those associated with ataxia, can be treated with acupuncture at

points of the gallbladder meridian. Acupuncturists describe these illnesses as “wind illnesses” and allow wind to escape using the points of the gallbladder meridian.

The point lies in the intercostal space of the sixteenth rib.

BL 20 – *Pi Shu*

The spleen meridian runs along the inside of the hind leg and its agreement point can give hints to pain along the inner hind. However, most of the time when this point is sensitive to pressure, it’s indicative of an internal problem with the digestive tract. For a *pi* type horse, sensitivity can also indicate psychological stress.

According to Chinese medicine, the spleen holds everything in its place. Horses with stocked-up legs will require treatment along the spleen meridian.

This point lies in the intercostal space of the seventeenth rib. If you work from the last rib and move forward, this will be the first intercostal space you come to.

BL 21 – *Wei-Shu*

The stomach meridian travels over the stifle and runs down the front of the hind leg to the hoof. The agreement point will be sensitive when there are stifle problems.

This point lies behind the last rib.

1-2 *Here's how you locate the shu point of the liver, gan shu/BL 18: The horse has 18 ribs. Gan shu lies in the intercostal space of the fourteenth rib.*

1

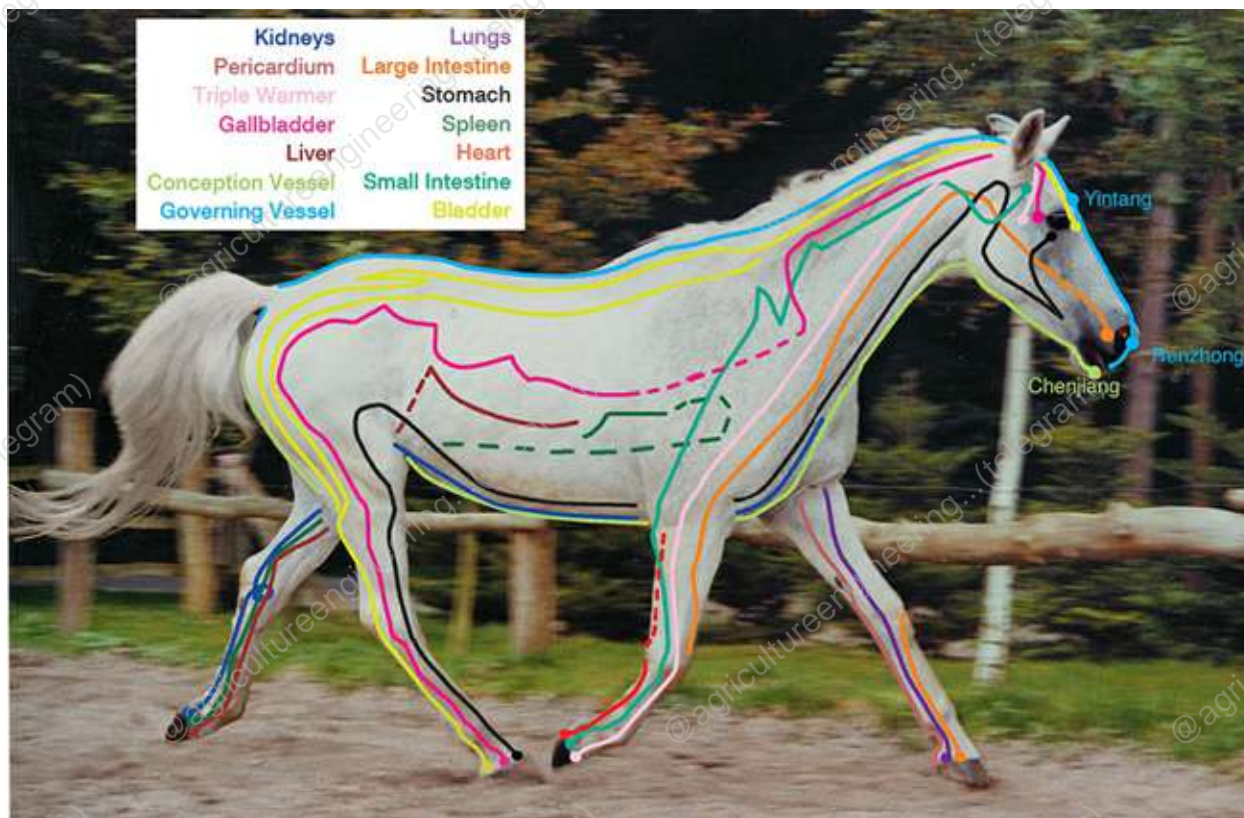


The easiest approach is to move from the back of the horse's barrel, along the side of the chest wall. Count five intercostal spaces between the ribs. Now, your hand will lie in the fourteenth (from the front) intercostal space.

2



After locating the fourteenth intercostal space, slide the pointer finger toward the spine. Find shu point BL 18 one hand-width away from the spine.



The meridians cover the body like a river system. They come into contact with each other and connect with the organs to which they belong.

BL 22 – San Jiao-Shu

San jiao, otherwise known as the triple warmer, runs in the front leg. In addition, the triple warmer divides the body into three sections: upper, middle, and lower heaters. For example, if qi is not reaching the lower heater, gynecological problems can result and these require acupuncture treatment.

San jiao shu lies between the transverse processes of the first and second lumbar vertebrae.

BL 23 – Shen-Shu

The agreement point of the kidneys is a very important *shu* point. The kidney meridian runs along the hind leg, over the inside of the hock. Hock problems will cause this *shu* point to be sensitive to pressure.

The Chinese kidneys house the source of qi and are responsible for growth and reproduction.

As soon as a growth spurt begins, a young horse will react to palpation at *shen shu*. Often, this coincides with growing teeth. This horse needs time off from work, especially if he is a *shen* type, in order to avoid bone and joint problems later.

Often, *shen shu* and *pi shu* are both reactive when there are problems with the sexual organs.

The Chinese kidneys are responsible for the lumbar and pelvic region. For horses that frequently experience azoturia (“tying up”), *shen shu* can be treated with acupuncture.

The point lies between lumbar vertebrae two and three (see photos 1–4, p. 79).

BL 25 – *Dachang-Shu*

The agreement point of the large intestine becomes sensitive to pressure when a horse experiences blockages of the exterior foreleg and illnesses in the digestive track.

The point lies between lumbar vertebrae 5 and 6.

BL 27 – *Xiaochang-Shu*

The agreement point of the small intestine reacts to disturbances in the small intestine meridian on the foreleg and to digestive system problems.

This point lies off to the side, behind the *foramen lumbosacral*.

BL 28 – *Pang-Guan-Shu*

The agreement point of the bladder will be painful when there’s a blockage on the inner side of the bladder meridian, which runs along the neck, over the back, and down the hind leg to the hoof.

Practical Procedures for Examining the Shu Points

The examiner should stand on the left side of the horse. With the right hand, search for the last rib (photo 1, p. 79). The horse has 18 ribs. Working from the back of the rib cage, move your right hand vertically, up to the spine (photos 2 and 3). After reaching the spine, glide your pointer finger one vertical hand-width back in the direction you came from. Slide your finger into a slight indentation, which is the agreement point of the kidneys, *shen shu* (photo 4).

How hard you press with your fingers must be adjusted according to the sensitivity of the horse’s skin. If touching the *shen shu* causes a sensitive reaction, you should try using the same pressure in another place, for example, on the shoulder. The horse should not be avoiding this touch; if so, you are applying too much pressure with the fingers. Once you’ve found the right touch for the horse, you should apply the same amount of pressure at each *shu* point.

Once the agreement point of the kidneys has been examined, move your right hand to the last rib once again. This time, do not move upward in a vertical line, but instead follow the rib’s path until you reach the spine. There, slide your pointer

finger one hand-width back along the path you traveled. Behind the last rib is the *shu* point of the stomach.

To find the agreement point of the spleen, stroke your hand forward over the last rib, finding the seventeenth intercostal space. Again, move upward to find the spine, then glide backward to the *pi shu*.

The remaining *shu* points can be found by moving the hand forward, counting off the intercostal spaces. The *shu* point of the gallbladder lies in the intercostal space right in front of the *shu* point of the spleen. To reach the *shu* point of the liver, BL 18, you must then skip over one intercostal space. BL 18, the *gan shu*, is then located between the fourteenth and fifteenth ribs (see photo, p. 75).

Finding the *shu* points requires patience and tranquility. You must examine the *shu* points on both sides. Afterwards, you will know which meridians have disturbances. In the best case, only one *shu* point will be sensitive. This indicates only one meridian has a disturbance and can be treated. Most of the time, more than one *shu* point is affected. In this case, in order to reach a precise diagnosis, more acupuncture points must be examined. If there's an internal illness, acupressure will not help. A disturbance of an outer meridian can be cleared up using the following steps:

1. First, check out *dai mai* and if there is a blockage, apply acupressure at GB 41 to open.
2. BL 10, *tianzhu*, drives the flow of qi in the bladder meridian. Most of the time, acupressure is applied to BL 10 for 60 seconds. Afterwards, the *shu* points will again be examined. Using the qi that now flows through the bladder meridian, other, lesser-affected meridians will also have adjusted themselves. The sensitivity to pressure at their associated points will have disappeared.
3. The rest of the *shu* points that are sensitive to touch should be considered in connection with the horse's mental health.

With an irritated horse with tight muscles, you'll find two *shu* points sensitive to the touch: BL 18, *gan shu*, the agreement point of the liver, and BL 27, *xiaochang shu*, the agreement point of the small intestine. Here, the primary trouble is in the liver meridian and should be treated using point LV 3, *taichong*. If this point is treated with acupuncture needles, the *gan shu*'s sensitivity to touch will disappear in seconds.

4. After eight days, the *shu* points will be checked again. Steps 1–3, above, will be repeated. The acupressure treatment will change based on which meridians are now affected. After 14 days, the bladder meridian should be free and no *shu* points should remain sensitive to touch. If this doesn't work, it indicates a deeper energy disturbance, in which case the horse must first be treated with acupuncture then with acupressure.

1-4 Here is how to locate the shu point of the kidneys, shen shu/BL 23:

1



The examiner stands facing the horse. The pointer finger of the right hand finds the last rib. The left hand remains on the horse.

2



The right hand strokes upward, vertically, in the direction of the spine.

3



The right pointer finger reaches the spine.

4



After reaching the spine, the right pointer finger backtracks and slides into a slight indentation. This is the shu point of the kidneys, shu/BL 23.

The *shu* points allow the practitioner to determine rather quickly whether there is an inner or outer disturbance. However, the *shu* points alone cannot determine the diagnosis, as the following real-life example shows.



GB 41, Zulingqi

Patient Example:

Dari, a five-year-old mare of the *shen* type, presented with back problems. When turned to the right while being ridden, Dari would rear and then take off in a panic. Many riders had attempted to solve this problem. The last labeled the horse as a rogue and beat her badly, after which the horse would not allow anyone to ride her at all.

The horse is a sweet, somewhat timid animal who gets along well with other horses, but who actually hurts all over her body. Worst of all is the pain and muscle tension in her back. Because *shu* point Bladder 18 is responsible for muscular tension, you would believe that acupuncture should be applied at this point.



With patience and empathy, Dari's rider won the trust of her horse.

However, the mare received acupuncture at *shu* point Bladder 23. Additionally, acupuncture was applied at GB 20 and the mare received a Ying-Yang Balancing at her head.

Dari was worked on the longe line for a week, treated twice more with acupuncture, and after that went back to work under saddle without any problem.

Rationale:

The *shu* point Bladder 18 is associated with the Chinese liver. You might guess that this point must be treated. However, you must not forget that in Chinese Medicine, the body and soul are not separated. This horse was more fearful than aggressive. The mare is a *shen*, or kidney type.

According to Chinese beliefs about the teachings of the five elements, the kidneys represent the mother of the liver. If the kidneys do not cool the liver (her son), correctly, this functional cycle becomes deficient and the liver's fire is lit. So, the disturbance of the liver meridian was actually a secondary problem. This horse does not need to be calmed down, but rather built up.



Acupuncture applied at BL 23.

By applying acupuncture to the *shu* point of the kidneys, Bladder 23, the energy blockage in the kidneys is resolved and the horse gets the help she needs. If instead acupuncture had been applied at Bladder 18, there would surely have only been a short-term improvement.

This example shows clearly that back pain often indicates a complex problem and cannot be viewed in isolation. In addition to treating the horse, it's also imperative that the horse's environment (barn conditions, saddle fit, pasture) are optimized. Otherwise, these factors continue to work against the horse, eventually bringing on further ailments.

Treatment Principles

In ancient China, the best acupuncturist was the one that could successfully heal an illness with one needle applied to a single acupuncture point. Many horse owners assume, falsely, that the horse will be helped more if a large number of needles are applied. Sometimes, an illness does require many acupuncture points to be needed, but the goal should be to treat the horse using as few points as possible.



GB 20, Fengchi



LI 4, Hegu



LV 3, Taichong

Out of the hundreds of known points, I've chosen to describe just a small selection of 15 points in this book. They allow the beginner a starting point for acupressure, and by mastering these, the rider can already contribute much to her horse's well-being.

Choosing the Acupressure Points

Points used in an acupressure treatment are divided into three groups:

1. Near Points

These lie in the region of the current blockage. For example, poll pain is addressed using point GB 20, *fengchi*, which lies directly behind the ears.

2. Far Points

These points are found in the region of the four limbs. LI 4, *hegu*, is characterized as having a strong pain-relieving effect and would be designated as a far point applicable to the above poll problem.

3. Psychological Points

These points are used to restore mental balance and for type-dependent conditions. For example, LV 3, *taichong*, is used to treat the excessive reactions of a *gan* type.

During treatment, a near point will be combined with one to three far points. If a mental health issue is present, acupressure will also be applied at a psychological point.

Important:

When the layperson is using acupressure, she should never apply pressure at more than five points. (Yin-Yang balancing and acupressure for the eyes are the exceptions.)

Applying Pressure to the Acupressure Points

Chinese massage is called *anmo*, which translates as “press and rub.” The designation *tuina* is a collective term, which refers to all techniques that make the muscles and joints more flexible including massaging the meridian and acupuncture points as well as chiropractic techniques.

Both here and in China, it is most common to first treat with acupuncture, followed by *tuina* massage. Among the many techniques available, massaging of the acupuncture points is quickest and the easiest to apply.

To practice acupressure, you use your pointer finger, thumb, knuckles, and the palm of your hand or ball of your thumb. The reaction of the horse is the determining factor. With nervous horses, I recommend beginning with your entire hand; for example, on the eyes. If the rider knows the exact position of the points and the horse is quiet, she can use her pointer finger.

There are three distinct techniques:

1. Balancing Method

This can be applied at any acupressure point. First, you touch the point carefully. Then, slowly increase the pressure using a clockwise, circular motion. From the corner of your eye, always watch the horse’s face. As soon as the corners of the mouth relax, the ear on the side where you are working tips lightly sideways, and the eyes close fully relaxed, you will know you are applying an optimal amount of pressure.

Because every horse is an individual, it is not possible to assign a number to the amount of pressure you will need. It’s important to wait for the horse’s relaxation response. Acupressure on individual points should never bring forth a defensive response.

If you are not aiming to suppress or stimulate energy, but rather just to balance the horse or help him relax, maintain acupressure for one minute. The movement should continue in a clockwise direction. If you want to balance the energy of a

meridian, stroke the path of the meridian. This means stroking the inside of the leg working upward from the hoof (Yin-Meridians) or stroking the outside of the leg, working downward to the hoof (Yang-Meridians).



Acupressure is most commonly applied with the pointer finger. The hand must stay relaxed throughout.



SP 21, dabao, receives acupressure using the knuckles.



Point LI 16, jugu, receives acupressure using the thumb.

The Ying-Yang Balancing and acupressure of the eyes can always be applied for a balancing effect.



For a horse with sensitive skin, acupressure can be executed on dabao using the palm of the hand.



Acupressure of the eyes can be performed using the pointer finger or the whole hand.

2. The Yin Method

This application is powerful, grinding, and exerts strong pressure on the point for a longer time, at least 2 minutes.

This technique suppresses and calms. For example, if you were to press the point LV 3, *taichong*, to quiet a *gan* type, the pressure should be applied strongly at the point, though not so strongly that the horse lifts his leg in pain. The pressure should be applied in a clockwise direction or the path of the meridian should be massaged.

3. The Yang Method

This method is applied using less pressure and for a shorter amount of time, about 30 seconds.

This method energizes the horse and mobilizes energy. For example, to support a *shen* type with acupressure at point KI 3, *taixi*, you would use a soft pressure. The movement is clockwise or follows the path of the meridian.

The yang method is optimal for use after a long, strenuous ride or competition. Also, following an extended stay at a veterinary clinic, the yang method is perfect

to help with recovery.

Bringing It All Together:

1. Balancing Method – even pressure – harmonizing
2. Yang Method – soft pressure – energizing
3. Yin Method – stronger pressure – calming

How Long to Apply Acupressure

The duration of an acupressure massage varies between a minimum of 30 seconds and two minutes or longer per point, depending on the technique being utilized and the horse's response.

If you have selected five points to work on, the acupressure treatment should last between 7 and 20 minutes, depending on whether you apply acupressure to both sides or just one. It is better to apply acupressure to both sides.

Quantity and Frequency of Acupressure Treatments

For psychological problems, acupressure should be applied daily.

When using acupressure to prepare for competition, begin three days beforehand, applying once or twice a day, and continuing throughout the event. It's important not to forget that a very nervous rider is likely to pass along her energetic state to the horse through the application of acupressure. Make sure that a balanced person is applying the acupressure!

If a competition or a long-distance ride was very challenging for the horse, restorative acupressure should be used for two days afterwards.



LV 3, Taichong



KI 3, Taixi

Apply acupressure once or twice a day when it's being utilized preventatively; for example, if there is a cough going around the barn and you want to support your horse's general immunity.

If using acupressure to fortify a horse's defenses while he's recovering from a longer-term health problem, apply one time per day for at least 14 days.

Pain in the poll, which presents as a localized problem, can receive acupressure four times daily.

If you do not see improvement or see symptoms worsening in any situation, you must consult a veterinarian or acupuncturist.

Bringing It All Together:

- The practitioner must balance herself
- The practitioner must activate her own meridians
- Find an appropriate environment
- Observe the horse
- Palpate the horse

- Open the *dai mai*
- If applicable, examine the *shu* points
- Choose your points and acupressure method
- Determine the length and frequency for acupressure at each point
- Apply acupressure

The Practice

In the following chapter, I'll describe problems that affect horses and people in daily life. My choice of points should not be seen as binding, but it is based on many years of experience.

When treating the points, it's crucial to keep the principles of Chinese medicine in mind, especially that each horse is an individual. In treatment, the mental and physical problems must be considered together in order to determine what points to work with. Because each acupuncture point has multiple functions, there are also diverse point combinations. Therefore, it is always helpful to consult an experienced acupuncturist. However, once the reader knows the function of a point, she can also work on her own horse in particular to choose and find a point, then apply acupressure.

You can find descriptions of the different effects of individual points and accompanying patient examples in the chapters "Acupressure Points to Mentally Balance Each Horse Type" (p. 50) and "Acupressure Points – Description and Effects" (p. 132).

General Support without Specific Problems

The techniques described next, Yin-Yang Balancing and acupressure of the eyes, can be utilized at any time. Often without knowing it, people apply acupressure to themselves by using their fingertips to massage between their eyes or stroke around their eyes when feeling tense.

Horses that become very familiar with the Yin-Yang Balancing and acupressure for the eyes stand quietly and relaxed with their necks lowered as they await the beneficial treatment.

Yin-Yang Balancing

Completing a Yin-Yang Balancing means the horse achieves mental and physical balance. A Yin-Yang Balancing is based on a combination of the following three acupuncture points:

***Yintang* – Hall of Impression – Extra Point**

This point is located above the eyes in the middle of the forehead, on the governing vessel meridian. It allows wind out and thereby relieves pain. This point calms the spirit and can be used as a supplementary point to reduce anxiety.

***Renzhong* – Man's Middle – GV 26**

This point lies between the nostrils along the governing vessel meridian. On horses, the Chinese refer to this point as *fen shui*. It is located in the area where a twitch is used to immobilize a horse. The horse does not stand still because of pain; rather, he stands still because brain matter that has a calming effect is being released within. The same brain process takes place when applying acupuncture needles or acupressure at *renzhong*.

***Chengjiang* – Receiving Fluid – CV 24**

On the lower lip, there is a place of transition between where the horse has hair and where he doesn't. There is a small indentation here, and that is where you'll find this point. It establishes a connection to the governing vessel.

For a Yin-Yang Balancing, all three points will receive acupressure, one after the other. Begin acupressure with *renzhong*, followed by *yintang*, then finally *chengjiang*. *Yintang* should receive acupressure for at least 60 seconds, and the other two points for at least 30 seconds.

A Yin-Yang Balancing can be repeated and executed at any time. In acupuncture therapy, a Yin-Yang Balancing is often utilized after acupuncture needles have been applied to the *shu* points on only one side of the horse. In most cases, the *shu* points on the untreated side will self-regulate their own sensitivity to pressure following the Yin-Yang Balancing. When this occurs, a one-sided acupuncture treatment is sufficient. Subsequently, the Yin-Yang Balancing has balanced the energy on the two sides of the body. As a general rule when using acupressure, it should be applied on both sides of the body.

There is not a hard-and-fast rule as to whether the Yin-Yang Balancing should be used at the beginning or end of acupressure. My opinion is to perform the Yin-Yang Balancing at the end, because it will balance the energy that has been activated by working on the points.



Yintang and renzhong



The point renzhong has a quieting effect.



Renzhong and chengjiang

In practice, hold your left hand at the horse's head, either on the halter or over the nose. The right hand finds the *yintang* by forming a triangle, moving from the inner corner of both eyes, upward toward the forehead. The point presents itself there as a slight indentation, in which you can slide your pointer finger. The fingertip remains on the *yintang*, carefully maintaining a light pressure on the point for 20 seconds. After that, you can begin a tiny, clockwise movement.

Some head-shy horses accept acupressure more easily if you begin their massage by using the ball of your thumb or the flat of your hand. The same goes for horses that get nervous as soon as you try to apply acupressure to the upper lip. Again, try the ball of your thumb or palm of your hand.

Horses that are used to receiving lots of hand-fed treats may not allow the *chengjiang* (CV 24) to be handled as they are too distracted by seeking food. In these cases, only patience will help.

When acupressure is applied regularly, every rider and horse owner will notice how comfortably relaxed the horse becomes through Yin-Yang Balancing. If it's truly executed properly, the horse will lower his head, allow his ears to fall out to the side, and peacefully close his eyes.



Yintang can be used to quell anxiety.

Acupressure of the Eyes

Around the eyes, there are many points that can be accessed with acupressure. They are starting points or end points for meridians. These points have an especially strong effect.

The following descriptions are for two individual points.

Bladder 1 – *Jingming* – Bright Eyes

Effects:

- Allows wind and heat out.
- Relieves pain and itching.
- Reduces the flow of tears.

The bladder meridian begins with this point, at the inner corner of the eye. BL 1 is used for treating conjunctivitis of the eyes. It creates a connection with two other

extraordinary meridians, *yinqiaomai* and *yangqiaomai*. In addition, *jingming* is the *jiaohui*-crossing point for the bladder, small intestine, and stomach meridians. With acupressure of the eyes, all of these are influenced.

Stomach 1 – *Chengqi* – Tear Container

Effects:

- Diminishes outer and inner wind
- Reduces the flow of tears

Stomach 1 lies in beneath the lower eyelid, in the middle. It is connected to the extraordinary meridian, *yangqiaomai*. It is used to relieve conjunctivitis of the eye.

In and around the eye, all meridians and organs meet in connection. Through acupressure of the eye, disturbances can be influenced and rebalanced.

The practitioner should work on both eyes and spend at least 30 seconds on each eye. The practitioner begins at BL 1, *jingming*, and massages clockwise all the way around the eye, working back to the starting point. This acupressure technique will relax the horse greatly. If practiced without hurry and for a long enough time, the horse will lower his head and blow out.

There are many situations where Yin-Yang Balancing and acupressure can be utilized, for example before a training session, before transport, and before and after unfamiliar experiences.



Jingming harmonizes the bladder meridian and is therefore used for back problems.



Chengqi lies beneath the bottom eyelid.



With anxious horses, begin acupressure of the eyes by using your whole hand.



Acupressure for the eyes begins with point BL 1, jingming.

Acupressure for the Growing Horse

For the most part, acupuncture and acupressure are practiced on horses age three and older. This is based on the belief that these healing arts are most often used for pain relief and are, therefore, most helpful for horses that are already being ridden or driven.

Acupuncture is often used as a therapy for muscular tension, especially in the back and neck of the horse. Acupuncture applied in combination with acupressure is a much more broadly applicable therapy, as it also works to support the horse's immune system and mental health. Therefore, this combination can be implemented with good results, even on foals and growing horses. In addition to his genetically predisposed disposition, the first three years of life determine the physical and spiritual development of the horse.

Foals that have an easy birth, an attentive mother with enough milk, and an optimal environment can grow up to be healthy. A long, difficult birth can result in a foal that is weak, has problems with standing and, therefore, does not receive

colostrum through his mother's first milk. It's possible that a mare does not pay enough attention to her foal, or that the environment is wet or the bedding is unsuitable or dirty. It will be difficult for a foal that has such a difficult start in life to develop optimally.

Breeders speak often of "strong" or "weak" foals. Lively foals with a strong will to live can more easily overcome and stay healthy through problematic situations such as infection, bad weather, or inconsistent milk flow from the mother. Weaker foals will develop well in optimal situations, but cannot tolerate unhealthy circumstances. About these foals, a breeder might say, "If a light breeze comes through, this foal won't have the will to fight it."

According to the beliefs of Chinese medicine, the varying ability of foals to handle burdensome situations is determined by their *essence*.

The essence is associated with the kidney organ as well as the functional cycle of the kidneys and bladder. The essence is an energy form, which represents the strength of an individual's ability to overcome those influences that make us physically or mentally ill.



You can recognize healthy and vital foals by their alertness and bold expression.

The foal's *essence* is comprised of two components:

- Pre-heaven essence
- Post-heaven essence

Together, they form the:

- *Shen*, or kidney, essence

The Pre-Heaven Essence

The pre-heaven, or pre-natal essence is based on energy inherited from the parents, so the combined energy of the stallion and mare is passed along to the offspring. Inherited energy is different for each foal, even when foals come from the same pairing. During gestation, a foal in the womb only has pre-heaven essence. Because this energy is inherited, it cannot be increased throughout the horse's life.

The Post-Heaven Essence

The post-heaven, or post-natal energy is constituted by the energy taken on after birth, through nutrition and food. The foal begins to breathe and to drink. From this, comes the post-heaven essence.



Instinctively, a healthy foal seeks the “protected place” where he'll find the life-giving milk source.



Cautious type or daredevil?

The *Shen* Essence

The *shen* essence consists of the pre- and post-heaven essences, which combine to form the individual essence of the foal. As opposed to life energy *qi*, which flows all over, essence is found primarily in the kidneys (the *shen*) and in the eight extraordinary meridians.

The essence is responsible for growth, development, and reproduction in horses. Faulty conformation due to growth problems, difficulties with teeth coming in, developmental disorders, and problems with sexual maturation can all be the result of disturbances to the essence. The essence forms the basis for defensive *qi*, or *wei qi*, which is responsible for developing our immunity against pathogens.

A weak essence leads to a lack of functioning defensive *qi*, increasing the tendency toward frequent illness. Therefore, it's crucial that the foal gets colostrum, with all the important elements it contains, to properly build up his post-heaven essence.

Acupressure in the First Hour After Birth

While waiting for the veterinarian after the foal's birth, the breeder can support the development of the foal's post-heaven essence in that first hour. To do so, apply acupressure at the following points:

ST 36 – Zusanli strengthens stomach and spleen to build the post-heaven essence, encourages appetite and supports the building of defensive qi.

SP 6 – Sanyinjiao tones the spleen and nourishes the blood.

Apply acupressure at this point once every 15 minutes for 30 seconds each time. No longer, because it should have a stimulating effect.

Acupressure can also be applied at this point to support a foal that is experiencing meconium impaction (difficulty passing the first manure after birth).



Foals and young horses lie down frequently, which in and of itself is not a sign of a weak constitution.

The mare can be supported by using the following points:

SP 21 – Dabao controls the network of small blood vessels and relieves general pain.

LI 4 – Hegu is a strong point for pain and supports the lungs in distributing qi. Through this, it strengthens the body's defenses.

KI 3 – Taixi supports the kidney qi.

GB 41 – Zulinqi harmonizes the liver qi.

SP 6 – Sanyinjiao connects the three yin meridians and strengthens the mare by influencing her spleen.

Yin-Yang Balancing and Acupressure of the Eyes

Optimally, acupuncture will be used to balance the mare's energy within the first 14 days after birth. Acupuncture normalizes the womb and supports milk production.

Acupressure in the First Year

Within a few days of birth, it will become clear whether the foal is more the reserved and careful type or a go-getter. Naturally, the mare's behavior influences her offspring and an uneasy mare is more likely to have a cautious foal. Aside from that, you can get to know the foal's fundamental character through long and careful observation. A perky, healthy foal does not need acupressure, as his energy is balanced and should not be altered. However, if there is illness, injury, or high levels of fear and anxiety, then Chinese medicine can help very impressively. This is also true when a foal has a hard time handling the separation from his mother and begins to fret excessively.



Playing with peers encourages agility.



A healthy horse is the result of optimal upbringing.

Acupressure must always be applied to build the foal up, which means short applications and light pressure on the point. A Yin Yang Balancing and acupressure of the eyes can be applied at any time.

To support mental health, use acupressure as follows:

KI 3 – *Taixi* supports the flow of kidney qi.

SP 6 – *Sanyinjiao* nourishes blood and yin and supports the spleen (*pi*).

In addition, if there is an infection: GB 20 – *Fengchi* channels wind out.

LI 4 – *Hegu* works to build up and stimulate in combination with ST 36, *zusanli*. Helps in the case of injury.

LI 4 – *Hegu* offers strong pain relief.

As a rule, acupressure is applied twice a day. In the case of acute illness, a foal can receive acupressure once every three hours as a means of supporting the veterinarian's treatment.

If the foal presents as weak and tending toward infections in his first year, consult an acupuncturist who can prescribe ongoing acupressure. Because foals react very intensely to acupuncture, it is often better to use acupuncture needles in only a few places and to apply acupressure on the remaining points.

Acupressure Through the Third Year of Life

After being weaned, most foals will live in a herd with other horses their age. Therefore, it's often difficult to provide acupressure, unless the herd is very small and has frequent contact with people.

In this period, it's really important to watch for physical signs of health and wellness problems. The body of a yearling often looks awkward. This is a normal consequence of various growth spurts. However, the appearance of an unhealthy coat, reluctance to play with other yearlings, loss of appetite and/or a lot of weight must be checked out and treated.

All young horses experience respiratory infections. However, if after such an infection, a one- or two-year-old seems to fall behind other horses his age developmentally, he should be treated.

Because all growing animals react intensely and quickly to acupuncture and acupressure, you can awaken and balance energy in these formative years. Otherwise, weaknesses and vulnerabilities take hold and only become more difficult to influence later in the horse's life.

Acupressure for the Older Horse

There is not one single age that determines when a horse can be described as "old." There are 16-year-old horses that are sound and successful in athletic activity. There are also 12-year-old horses that, due to wear and tear, no longer enjoy work and appear very tired and old as they go. This section is applicable to horses 12 years old and up.

The essence is the basis for growth, sexual maturation, reproduction and development, and it is cultivated differently for every horse. During the life of the horse, his essence will gradually decrease and through this, the horse begins to age. If a horse has a strong essence and suitable environmental conditions, he will begin to appear old relatively late. For a horse with a weak essence, one that has also perhaps lived in less-than-ideal circumstances, the aging process will likely already begin to work against him at age 10.

With balanced nutrition, you can influence the horse's post-heaven essence and thereby strengthen the overall essence.

Acupressure for an older horse should always aim to strengthen "the horse's center." Therefore, the following points should always receive acupressure:

SP 6 – Sanyinjiao strengthens the spleen, which is responsible for the formation of nutritional qi.

ST 36 – Zusanli strengthens qi and blood and should be used for all chronic illnesses.

KI 3 strengthens the kidney qi.



The vital, 19-year-old Kiwi enjoys every jump. He likes it best without tack, just a neck ring.



Old and young: Thanks to his willingness to go and his experience at competitions, 19-year-old Kivi makes a great partner for his young rider.

Chinese medicine can very effectively support an older horse that is especially sensitive to weather changes; for him, dampness and cold tend to cause stiffness and small aches and pains. When using acupuncture on a much older horse, the practitioner must examine the horse very precisely and not apply needles too intensively. As with a young foal, fewer needles should be used and acupuncture treatment should be immediately followed by daily acupressure.

Older horses are very thankful for acupressure and enjoy it. You can tell by the glossed-over, relaxed look that always comes over the horse's face as soon as he has become familiar with acupressure. Still, the entire body of the older horse will react more slowly to acupressure than that of a younger horse. Therefore, acupressure must be applied more often. For example, in general you would apply acupressure twice a day as a preventive against infectious diseases. With an 18-year-old horse, you should apply acupressure four times a day for this purpose.



Rino is a 24-year-old pi type who enjoys weekend trail rides.

Solutions for Psychological Problems

(Application: Once daily)

If you observe a change in your horse's normal behavior, you should immediately apply acupressure. It's much easier to correct a disturbance that is just beginning, before it has really set in. After a strenuous schooling, an exciting trail ride or a weekend of competition, you can support and balance your horse with acupressure.

This can be done using:

1. Acupressure of the eyes.
2. Acupressure geared toward your horse's specific constitution type, using the respective points.



SI 3, Houxi is located on the outside foreleg, beneath the tip of the splint bone.



Zulinqi lies on the outside of the hind leg beneath the hock.

Shen Type:

KI 3 – *Taixi*: increases self-confidence.

SI 3 – *Houxu*: stabilizes an anxious horse.

Gan Type:

LV 3 – *Taichong*: quiets an irritated horse, relaxes muscular tension.

GB 41 – *Zulinqi*: harmonizes qi in the liver meridian.

Pi Type:

SP 6 – promotes life energy in a sluggish horse.

With sudden changes in behavior, there is always an identifiable root cause, which sometimes is not obvious immediately. Herd changes, a new neighbor in the stable, a different partner for trailering or an unfamiliar rider can all cause the horse to react with sudden aggression or unusual anxiety.



Inside the hind leg, above the hock, lies SP 6. Beneath that, KI 3 and then finally LV 3.



Don't forget the Yin-Yang Balancing!

I'm constantly asked if there is a point combination that addresses a horse's fear or unwillingness to load in a trailer. Loading problems are too multi-faceted to solve with a single point combination. The rider first needs to determine if the horse's reluctance to load is caused by fear, stubbornness, or disrespect. Then, select the points and proceed from there. In my practice, horses with this issue first receive an acupuncture treatment and then, after a consultation, acupressure from the owner.

Patient Example:

Louis, a seven-year-old gelding, had always loaded in the trailer willingly and without problems when he was going to competitions. However, after his test, it was a huge challenge to load back up to return home from the show grounds. Louis refused to move forward as soon as his owner as much as turned him in the direction of the trailer's ramp.



Louis is a pi and shen combination type. This explains his mixed temperament: good-natured but anxious.

Louis is a well-adjusted horse who is successful at competitions. Long after performing, however, he would continue sweating in the trailer. That he was always so willing to load in the first place only proved he is essentially good-natured and willing. His owner believes horse shows are stressful for him and cause him to feel insecure. This leads to his resistance to loading up to head home.



GB 20, Fengchi, is found behind the ears.



LI 4, Hegu, is located inside the foreleg, below the knee joint.



KI 3, Taixi, on the hind leg.



LU 7, Lieque, helps the lungs to distribute defensive qi. Meaning, it supports the horse's immune system.

Louis began receiving acupuncture at home, before being loaded in the trailer. Following his round at competitions, his owner now applied acupuncture at SI 3 (helps to overcome anxiety) and LV 3 (relieves tension) and she applied a Yin-Yang Balancing.

After these treatments began, there was no improvement at the following competition. But, the weekend after that, Louis hesitated but ultimately loaded without resistance at the show grounds. Going forward, his owner continued to regularly apply acupuncture at competitions and Louis continued to load in the trailer without any problem.

Preventing Infections

(Application: Twice daily)

Daily, horses come into contact with germs. Whether the pathogen will prove dangerous and make the horse sick depends largely on his ability to resist infection. Acupuncture supports the immune system and therefore can be used effectively to help prevent infection.

LI 14 – *Hegu*: channels wind out. In the Chinese view, wind brings in all outer

elements that cause illness, bringing on the first indications of respiratory infection.

GB 20 – *Fengchi*: also channels wind out. Helps fight viral infections.

KI 3 – *Taixi*: drives the flow of kidney qi and thereby supports the building of *wei*, or defensive qi. *Wei qi* is responsible for our immune system, so this acupressure point bolsters the horse's immunities.

LU 7 – *Lieque*: helps the lungs to distribute the lung qi and moves the defensive qi. By doing so, it strengthens the horse's immune system.

Yin-Yang Balancing

The Ying-Yang Balancing is especially important as a preventative, as it harmonizes the two sides of the horse's body.



Soli no longer has any respiratory complaints.

Patient Example:

Soli, a 12-year-old gelding, regularly developed respiratory infections in the winter. In the summertime, his condition would improve but he still required regular medication to loosen mucus and suppress his cough.

Soli is a *shen* type, making him especially susceptible to illnesses in winter. Three years ago, beginning in November, he received acupuncture four times, with

10 days in between each treatment. During this time, he coughed up huge amounts of mucus. Over the following weeks, the owner applied acupressure once a week at LU 7 and KI 3. From then on, Soli had no further problems and when summer came, he did not require medication to get through the season.

Unfortunately, the owner next reached out for acupuncture the following December, after Soli had already come down with a respiratory infection once again. The gelding was then treated the same way as in the prior November. More proactively, this past year the owner arranged for acupuncture and acupressure to begin sooner, in October, and Soli stayed healthy through the winter. Excited to see how well acupuncture worked as a preventive, the owner began to set up regular examinations and treatments for her horse each fall. Up until this point, Soli has remained free of respiratory problems.

Acupressure After a Long Illness

(Application: Once daily)

Acupuncture combined with acupressure is extraordinarily helpful after a long illness. This includes Lyme disease and rhinopneumonitis.

When treating preventively, the horse is healthy overall. In contrast, post-illness, the horse will have a deeper energy disturbance. In addition to acupuncture, acupressure can be applied at the following points:

SP 6 – *Sanyinjiao*: strengthens the center and helps the horse overcome general weakness.

LU 7 – *Lieque*: helps the lungs distribute the lung qi; moves the defensive qi and supports the immune system.

ST 36 – *Zusanli*: fortifies qi and blood and boosts the spleen in building defensive qi.

Patient Example:

At a training barn for show jumpers, all 20 horses came down with bronchitis. After eight weeks of coughing, eight of the horses were still sick. They were lethargic and moved stiffly.

Each horse was treated differently with acupuncture, then all were supported over the following week with acupressure at points SP 6 (strengthens the center), ST 36 (enlivens the horse), LI 4 (relieves pain) and KI 3 (bolsters the immune system).

One week later, the horses were again treated with acupuncture and for 10 days received acupressure at points LU 7 (supports the immune system) and SP 6. They also received Yin-Yang Balancings.

After that, six horses were healthy. For the other two horses, acupuncture was

applied twice more, at 10-day intervals. For an additional 14 days, these two horses received acupressure and afterward were back to their full workload.

Stiffness and Pain at the Poll

(Application: up to four times daily)

Poll problems often begin on one side. Horses avoid pain in the poll region, either by resisting through the poll when ridden or tossing their heads. Acupressure can be applied to the pain-free side, followed by a Yin-Yang Balancing, as many as four to five times a day. Only after these initial steps, should acupressure be applied on the side that is actually painful.



When multiple horses in one barn came down with bronchitis, the acupuncture used to treat them was customized to each horse. They all received a standardized acupressure application, which included LU 7, SP 6, ST 36, LI 4, and KI 3.

With poll pain, it's always important to determine if the horse's teeth are in impeccable condition. Hooks on the teeth, missing teeth, and dental inflammation all lead to problems of mouth and poll when being ridden. Therefore, a horse's teeth should undergo a regular check-up on an annual basis.

The headstall of the bridle should have a relaxed fit behind the ears. Often, there is a heavy pressure at the poll as soon as the noseband is tightened.

A horse who has bumped his poll against a door frame or trailer ceiling should wear a fleece-lined crown piece so that the resulting bruise can heal properly. The same applies if the horse gets caught up while tied, resulting in excessive pressure from the halter at the poll.

For acupressure, it is important to determine whether the problem at the poll is being caused by a local problem, such as a bruise, or if it is the consequence of a tight back. Likewise, back pain may be localized or could be caused by psychological stress. A localized disturbance in the poll will be treated with near and far acupressure points. If it is a secondary problem, the catalyst for the problem must also be treated.

GB 20 – *Fengchi*: channels wind out and relieves localized pain at the poll. It establishes a connection to an extraordinary meridian, *yangqiaomai*. Among other things, this meridian works on unilateral pain and to relieve severe back pain.

BL 10 – *Tianzhu*: dissolves blockages in the bladder meridian, which runs over the neck and back. Because this point drains wind from all over the body, it works as a painkiller.

LI 4 – *Hegu*: as a far point, *hegu* has a distinct calming and pain-relieving effect on all painful conditions in the body.

SI 3 – *Houxi*: works similarly as a far point for the poll.

LV 3, KI 3, or SP 6: selected according to the horse's type.

Yin-Yang Balancing – always apply when there are problems at the poll.

Patient Example:

According to his owner, Roll-Up, a seven-year-old chestnut gelding, had problems with back tension. As soon as the rider picked up the reins, Roll-Up threw his head high and bolted forward. His teeth were examined and treated, but the problem continued to get worse.

The gelding is a *pi* type and tends to react calmly, not by panicking. An examination revealed back muscles that were overall sensitive and painful. There was a strong reaction to pressure at the agreement points of the gallbladder meridian. I advised the rider to work the horse without a noseband and the resistance lessened about 50 percent. The examination also revealed a pronounced pain at GB 20 on the right side. Free from the pressure the thin noseband had exerted on his poll, Roll-Up reacted immediately to the absence of pain by becoming more relaxed and supple. Therefore, the root cause of his bolting was indeed poll pain; the back pain was only an after-effect.

Roll-Up received one acupuncture treatment as well as acupressure on LI 4 (far

point for poll pain), GB 20, and BL 10 (relieves localized pain in the poll). The rider replaced Roll-Up's headstall with a padded one and from then on, had no further problems.

This example shows how a localized problem in the poll had consequences that were both mental (bolting) and physical (tight back muscles). A general treatment of the back muscles would not have helped Roll-Up at all or may have only provided very short-term relief.



Roll-Up got better because his acupuncture treatments addressed not only the symptoms of his problem, but also the root cause.

Balancing Exercises for the Neck

Acupressure influences energy disturbances in the poll and neck. However, many horses are afraid to bend and stretch due to stiffness in the neck and asymmetry at the poll. Therefore, I recommend the horse owner complement acupressure with stretching exercises for the neck.

In order to get the horse to work with you, it's best to have a few carrots on hand. Sugar, peppermints, and apples are gobbled up too quickly and then the horse will turn to face the front again. A carrot is best for tempting the horse to stretch in the desired direction (see photos pp. 112 and 113).

Many horses can only turn their necks completely in one direction. Owners are often astonished when they recognized how difficult it is for the horse to bend his neck to the other side.

With neck-stretching exercises, it's important not to lose patience but to be satisfied with small progress, at first. All exercises should be done twice a day for at least 14 days, and after work under saddle or on the longe line.

Three or four days after beginning with neck stretches, most horses will develop soreness in their neck muscles and find it difficult to reach the carrot. When this happens, use acupressure as described in the section about poll pain before every neck-stretching and continue cautiously (p. 107). In a short time, you will see success: the horse bends his neck effortlessly, both toward the ground and to either side.

Back Pain and Muscle Tension

Back pain is a symptom, though not necessarily the actual illness.

- A poorly fit saddle can cause the pain.
- When the horse's legs hurt, muscle tension occurs in the back.
- With chronic bronchitis, the horse cannot really breathe deeply, which causes muscular tension over the diaphragm in the back. To the rider, this again presents as a back issue, but the source of the problem is the respiratory system.

Before the back is treated, the actual cause must always be clarified. The root cause will be addressed first, then the back issue. If the problem exists only in the back, it can be treated right away.

Mild back tension can be influenced with acupressure. However, in my experience, it is much more effective to work together with an acupuncturist, who can first treat the back with acupuncture needles and then recommend specific acupressure points.

Acupressure can be used for 10 days at the following points. If there is no improvement, it is imperative to consult an acupuncturist.

BL 1 – *Jingming*: resolves blockages in the bladder meridian, which travels over the back.

BL 10 – *Tianzhu*: influences the deep muscles of the back.

GB 20 – *Fengchi*: works as a pain reliever.

SI 3 – *Houxu*: decongests the governing vessel, an extraordinary meridian that travels over the spinous processes. Therefore, acupressure should be applied here when back problems are present.

BL 60 – *Kunlun*: unblocks the bladder meridian and channels wind out, which means pain relief. It's a preferred point for relieving chronic back pain.

Muscular tension is often one-sided, so a Yin-Yang Balancing should be used in conjunction with the above.



A Yin-Yang Balancing is used at the beginning or end of an acupuncture application. Through this, the horse's energy is harmonized.



BL 10 helps with neck problems, but also increases a horse's concentration.



For back pain, the combination LI 4 and SI 3 should be used once a week over a six-month period.



The three psychological points SP 6, LV 3, and KI 3 heal both body and mind.



The horse bends his neck and follows the carrot to just behind his shoulder blade. If he tries to walk backward, do this exercise with the horse's hindquarters toward a wall. When bending, the poll should stay relatively straight, meaning the ears should stay an even height.



Pick up the front leg and hold it loosely. Keeping the poll straight, the horse bends his neck. The exercise should be repeated on both sides, never with force.



The hand reaches from behind, through the forelegs, tempting the horse.



To follow the carrot, the horse will stretch his head down between his forelegs. He should not bend a foreleg while doing so, but rather bear weight evenly with both forelegs.

Patient Example 1:

Henrilo, an eight-year-old gelding, has been lame in his left hind for the past three years (see photo). Administering pain medication has not helped. Twice, Henrilo has been given time off completely (turned out to pasture) for about three months each time. Afterward, he would appear sound, but as soon as work began, the lameness returned. Finally, he went to the animal hospital for a complete check-up. When no diagnosis could be reached, the gelding was referred over to me.



BL 1, Jingming, lies on the inner corner of the eye.



GB 20 and BL 10



SI 3, Houxi



BL 60, Kunlun, lies on the hind leg, to the outside of the hock.

Upon examination, Henrilo was diagnosed with what Chinese medicine calls a “qi blockage in the stomach meridian.” The stomach meridian travels over the stifle. The gelding was treated once with acupuncture. The owner applied acupressure at ST 1 (resolves blockages in the stomach meridian) and BL 60 (helps with chronic back pain). We had scheduled another acupuncture appointment for 10 days out. However, the horse no longer showed signs of lameness and continued to stay sound, even when put back to work.



Henri's rider is happy that she can continue to ride her horse!

Patient Example 2:

Lori, a 12-year-old grey mare, competed successfully at novice and elementary-level show jumping, but has had a cough for the past two years (see photo).

Lori had always performed happily over fences, but as the ride went on, she tired easily and her gaits became harder to ride. The owner asked that Lori be treated for tight back muscles. The owner was astonished when I told her that Lori's fatigue and back problems had their root in the mare's chronic cough.

A horse with a respiratory problem cannot breathe deeply. The horse does not get enough oxygen and therefore tires quickly. Lori was a very willing horse and always put forth effort, even when she could no longer breathe properly. She held her back tightly, with tension.

So, the cause of the problem was the chronic respiratory ailment. Lori received acupuncture three times. Both the cough and the tendency to fatigue quickly disappeared and Lori became easier to ride, even for longer periods of time. I advised the owner to give Lori an extended walk break once every 10 minutes throughout her ride, in order to avoid further lung damage. In addition, the owner applied acupressure at LI 4 and LU 7, once a week for five weeks.



Good-natured Lori now has fun again when she's ridden.

Restorative Care Following Injury or Surgery

Acupressure as restorative care can begin three days after an operation. If a horse is on stall rest during this time, you can help keep him quiet by applying acupressure once every three days.

LV 3 – *Taichong*: harmonizes liver yang while also encouraging the flow of liver qi. This point has a powerfully calming effect.

Yin-Yang Balancing

LI 4 – relieves pain and has a calming effect.

SP 6 – *Sanyinjiao* receives acupressure after an operation on a limb because the Chinese spleen is responsible for the limbs. If there is an injury, SP 21, *dabao*, will also receive acupressure applied once a day using the ball of the hand.

When therapeutic exercise (usually hand-walking) begins, the horse should receive acupuncture first. Consult with the acupuncturist about how to proceed with acupressure, as each horse will require applications at different points.

LI 16 – *Jugu*: influences the joints.

SI 3 – *Houxi*: influences pain and tension in muscles and tendons.

SP 6 – *Sanyinjiao* strengthens the center and stabilizes the muscles.

These points are commonly treated throughout the course of exercise therapy. To accelerate the recovery process after injuries and operations, rehabilitative medicine needs to go beyond hand-walking by instituting acupuncture, physical therapy, and osteopathy as complementary treatments.



SP 6, KI 3, and LV 3 on the hind leg.



As a pi type, Mango is very trustworthy, perfect for children and beginners.

Patient Example 1:

Mango, a 16-year-old pony, is used for therapeutic riding (see photo). A case of chronic inflammation of the suspensory ligament led to severe lameness in his left front. Upon examination, the veterinarian advised the owner to euthanize Mango. The pony was only able to move at the walk. He looked sad and did not respond when we greeted him.

Mango is a *pi* type. He was treated first with acupuncture. Then, acupressure was applied at ST 36 (supports the development of qi and has a building-up effect), SP 6 (strengthens the center), and LI 4 (especially powerful point for pain).

A couple of weeks later, the owner reported that just two days after his initial treatment, Mango actually galloped across the pasture! Afterward, however, he again moved only at the walk. In order to increase the body's energy, moxibustion at BL 23 (*shu* point for the kidneys) was added to the subsequent acupuncture treatment. Acupressure applications stayed the same.

By the third acupuncture appointment, Mango's overall condition was considerably better. When we greeted him, Mango lifted his head attentively and he

no longer just stood there, motionless. However, the lameness remained. Moxibustion was again applied.



LI 16, Jugu



SP 21, Dabao, lies in the girth area, beneath the shoulder blade.



SI 3, Houxi

At the fourth appointment, we met a much more vital Mango who not only looked great but was happy to move! Mango was still very slightly off, but he now trotted willingly on the longe line and galloped happily in the pasture.

Over the next few weeks, he went back to work in therapeutic riding. The instructor found she often had to longe him before the lesson; otherwise, Mango's movement was too much for the children. From a sad euthanasia case, a happy pony was revived. Mango is a great example of a horse whose vitality was improved through acupuncture and acupressure!



Following a successful jumping round, Ankor is rewarded by his rider.

Patient Example 2:

Ankor is a 10-year-old show jumper who has been successful at the Advanced Level (see photo). While jumping, he injured the superficial digital flexor tendon in his left foreleg and could not be worked for 10 weeks. After four weeks of rehabilitation, Ankor's rider began jumping him again. Unfortunately, a week later, the tendon injury recurred.

After an eight week layup and medical treatment, Ankor again began work at the walk. He also received acupuncture once a week as well as acupressure at the following points: SI 3 (influences inflammation in the muscles and tendons), LI 4 (pain relief), and BL 10 (as a far point). BL 10 loosens the deep tension that develops in the back muscles when a horse does not bear weight on a limb over a long period of time.

After he began jumping again without complications, I continued to examine Ankor about once every six weeks, treating him with acupuncture only if I discovered a problem with his energy. He received acupressure twice a week. Today, Ankor continues to advance in his jumping career without problems and is now monitored once every four months. However, the last three examinations did

not yield any findings, and Ankor required neither acupuncture nor acupressure.

Preparing for Competition

Acupressure should be applied once or twice a day, beginning three days before the start of a competition and continuing throughout. The person who applies acupressure at the competition may be someone different from the person who applies it at home. Most importantly, you need to keep a close watch on the horse's behavior throughout the event.

At home, an anxious horse receives acupressure of the eyes and at acupressure point KI 3 (increases the *shen qi*, boosting self-confidence). At a competition, however, a main priority for an easily excited horse is to calm him down. Therefore, the following points can be used at competitions:

LV 3 – *Taichong*: at least two minutes for a calming effect

Yintang: to soothe

BL 10 – *Tianzhu* increases concentration, especially useful with horses who are easily distracted.

Once back at home, acupressure can continue to help. Choose the acupressure point for mental stability according to your horse's type and use it in combination with local points:

SP 6 – to support a spleen type

KI 3 – to support a *shen* type

LV 3 – to support a liver type

Patient Example:

Navarolo is a seven-year-old grey gelding. He's a fast learner but also gets nervous easily, especially when dressage movements are ridden back to back.

This problem gets worse at competitions. Many times, the owner tried using Bach Flower therapy and acupressure but she was unable to get the situation under control. She had applied acupressure only during the competition.



To help with self-confidence, Navarolo's rider uses acupuncture on herself at point KI 3.



LV 3, Taichong



SP 6 lies inside the hind leg, above the hock.

Navarolo is a very sweet and devoted horse. His rider tends toward nervousness herself. After a consultation, the horse began receiving acupressure at home using the points KI 3 (supports self-esteem in the *shen* type), BL 10 (increases concentration) and GB 41 (relaxes muscular tension by harmonizing the liver qi and opening the belt vessel). This acupressure, applied when Navarolo was not under pressure, showed positive results after 14 days.



SP 6, KI 3, LV 3



BL 60, Kunlun lies to the outside of the hock.

At competitions, the rider continues to apply acupressure to Navarolo, but in addition uses acupressure on herself at point KI 3. Navarolo became increasingly relaxed during his tests, and it was easier for him to concentrate.

This example makes it clear that not only the horse but also the rider can benefit from acupressure.

Acupressure Points for Moving Qi through the Meridians

The following points move qi in specific meridians:

Bladder meridian:	BL 10, <i>Tianzhu</i> BL 60, <i>Kunlun</i>
Kidney meridian:	KI 3, <i>Taixi</i> SP 6, <i>Sanyinjiao</i>
Stomach meridian:	ST 36, <i>Zusanli</i> ST 1, <i>Chengqi</i>
Spleen meridian:	SP 6, <i>Sanyinjiao</i>
Large intestine meridian:	LI 16, <i>Jugu</i>
Lung meridian:	LU 7, <i>Lieque</i>

Small intestine meridian: SI 3, *Houxi*
Gallbladder meridian: GB 20, *Fengchi*
Liver meridian: GB 41, *Zulinqi*
LV 3, *Taichong*



LI 16



GB 20 and BL 10

Through acupressure, these points can dissolve blocked qi and increase the horse's well-being.

Combining Individual Points

The prior chapters described points that have stood the test in practice. But every reader can choose acupressure-point combinations customized for the needs of her own horse. As described in the section "Treatment Principles," (p. 81) you must include near points, far points, and mental balancing points in your combination.

No more than five points should receive acupressure at each treatment. In addition to the chosen five, you can always apply a Yin-Yang Balancing and acupressure of the eyes. Because every point has multiple functions and because it is difficult to keep them all in mind, the following pages present a summary of the effects of various points. Even if you find a suitable point combination, you should not necessarily use it every time you apply acupressure. Through acupressure, the status of the horse's energy will change. Therefore, you must carefully observe your horse, reevaluating and potentially choosing different points depending on his reactions.

Patient Example:

Ayumi was treated with acupuncture for hind-end lameness and back pain. The mare is a classic *gan* type. She lives in a run-in shed and rules her herd. If Ayumi enters the run in, the others must clear out for her. Although she learns easily and quickly, Ayumi and her rider have frequent confrontations if the mare gets bored or does not feel like working. Ayumi has fun with groundwork and circus tricks (such as bowing on command), so she is willing to enthusiastically repeat these exercises over and over again.



ST 36, Zusanli, moves qi in the stomach meridian.



LU 7



Acupressure point LI 4 lies inside the front leg; SI 3 lies to the outside.

However, because Ayumi is a *gan* type and tends toward muscular tension, it would be better for her to be handled in a way that is calming and mentally stabilizing for her.



With chronic illness, even a gan type can become weak.

I was completely amazed when, following a long-lasting bout of laminitis in her front feet, Ayumi no longer dared to enter her run-in shed and the other horses no longer showed her any respect. The illness and chronic pain had rendered the strong mare weak. Her weakened state was confirmed using a pulse diagnosis. The treatment course needed to be reconsidered: going forward, the mare did not need to be calmed down through her treatments, instead her kidney qi needed to be built up. Upon my next visit, I was very happy to be greeted by the good-old Ayumi, boss mare once more.

Acupressure Points – Areas of Application

Muscular Tension

GB 41 – *Zulinqi*

Opens the *dai mai* and relaxes muscular tension by harmonizing liver qi

LI 4 – *Hegu*

Works as a far point for poll pain

LV 3 – *Taichong*

Encourages the flow of liver qi

BL 10 – *Tianzhu*

Near point for poll pain; relaxes the back muscles

GB 20 – *Fengchi*

For poll pain

LI 16 – *Jugu*

Releases tension in the neck and shoulder regions

BL 60 – *Kunlun*

Helps with chronic back pain

SP 6 – *Sanyinjiao*

Stabilizes musculature

SI 3 – *Houxi*

For back tension, especially in acute situations

Strengthening the Horse's Immune System

LU 7 – *Lieque*

Distributes the lung qi and the wei qi

ST 36 – *Zusanli*

Fortifies qi and blood

LI 4 – *Hegu*

Helps the lungs to distribute qi

KI 3 – *Taixi*

Supports the flow of kidney qi

SP 6 – *Sanyinjiao*

Tones the spleen

GB 20 – *Fengchi*

Channels wind outward



Here, you can see all the acupuncture points described in this book.

Allergies

LU 7 – *Lieque*

Opens the nose

GB 20 – *Fengchi*

Alleviates itching

LI 4 – *Hegu*

Channels wind and heat out

LV 3 – *Taichong*

Relieves eye inflammation and supports liver yang

SP 21 – *Dabao*

For oversensitive skin

BL 1 – *Jingming*

Relieves itchiness

ST 36 – *Zusanli*
Distributes wind

Pain Relief

LI 4 – *Hegu*
Powerful pain-relieving point

GB 20 – *Fengchi*
Works on poll pain

BL 10 – *Tianzhu*
Dissolves pain deep in the back muscles

SP 6 – *Sanyinjiao*
Connection point for the three yin meridians of the hindquarters – spleen, kidneys, and liver

SI 16 – *Jugu*
Influences the joints

BL 60 – *Kunlun*
Works on the tendons

SI 3 – *Houxi*
Used for pain in the muscles and for tendon problems; also a far point for poll pain

BL 1 – *Jingming*
Relieves pain in the head, neck, and back regions

KI 3 – *Taixi*
Relieves pain in the knee, hoof, and croup regions

ST 36 – *Zusanli*
Influences stifle pain via the stomach meridian

Yintang
Works as a painkiller

SP 21 – *Dabao*
Relieves general muscle aches

Acute Respiratory Infections

LI 4 – *Hegu*

Channels wind out

BL 10 – *Tianzhu*

Channels wind out

ST 36 – *Zusanli*

Invigorates the horse

KI 3 – *Taixi*

Strengthens the kidney qi

SP 6 – *Sanyinjiao*

Animates the spleen

For Anxiety or Nervousness

KI 3 – *Taixi*

Bolsters the *shen* type

BL 10 – *Tianzhu*

Enhances the horse's concentration and memory

SI 3 – *Houxi*

Boosts self-confidence

Yintang

Calms the mind

For Irritability and Excitability

LV 3 – *Taichong*

Harmonizes liver qi; supports mental stability in the *gan* type

GB 41 – *Zulinqi*

Works to balance the flow of liver qi

For Sluggishness

SP 6 – *Sanyinjiao*

Supports the *pi* type

ST 36 – Zusanli

Increases appetite and fortifies qi and blood

Sources of Error

After being diagnosed and treated correctly, the horse's condition should improve. Should acupuncture not prove successful, the practitioner should not lose courage or confidence. Failure can be rooted in any of the following common errors, all of which can be corrected according to the accompanying recommendations (all, that is, except for unrealistic expectations!).

Unrealistic Expectations

If a horse has a lameness or internal illness, acupuncture cannot be used alone. Acupuncture cannot heal illness. In these cases, I recommend you work with your veterinarian or acupuncturist; otherwise, you can actually make the illness worse.



Acupuncture harmonizes the flow of energy.

Applications Are Too Short

For acupressure to be successful, each point must receive treatment for at least 30 seconds. Certain points, such as *yintang*, should be massaged for 60 seconds and in the case of LV 3, *taichong*, up to two minutes.

My experience shows that in general acupressure must be applied two or three times without being in a hurry. Often, if success is not immediately apparent, the practitioner becomes impatient. The horse then reacts to the practitioner's bad mood and can no longer relax. In contrast to acupuncture, which usually works very quickly, acupressure requires time, calmness, and repetition.

Choosing the Wrong Points

Because every point has more than one function, it's never easy to select the right points. For this reason, I advise only treating a few points, then seeing how the horse reacts.

Patient Example:

Filligran, a nervous show horse, received acupressure from his rider at KI 3 without success. Because of his anxiety, Filligran developed muscular tension during a horse show. At my advice, the rider applied acupressure to LV 3 (calms, relaxes muscles), LI 4 (pain reliever) and GB 41 (opens the belt vessel). The nervousness improved. Back home, the rider continued acupressure once a week at KI 3 and applied a Yin-Yang Balancing, continuing to increase Filligran's self-confidence.

Locating the Acupressure Points

Everyone learning to apply acupressure should carefully assess the points being treated; if you do not have prior knowledge of anatomy, the points can be somewhat difficult to locate. The best feedback will come from the horse. By means of a satisfied facial expression and relaxed body, your horse's positive reaction to acupressure should be easy to recognize.

Resistance to Acupressure

A horse that does not welcome the application of acupressure and reacts unwillingly is finding this practice uncomfortable. One of the following reasons applies:

- The environment is too hectic and the horse cannot concentrate on the practitioner.

- The practitioner is using the wrong amount of pressure on the acupuncture points.
- Acupuncture is being applied at the wrong points.
- The practitioner herself is not energetically balanced enough to perform acupuncture.

It may be necessary to change the time of the acupuncture application. Acupuncture will not be successful when the barn is full of activity, at feeding time, or if your horse has to stay in his stall when all his herd-mates are being turned out for the day. Acupuncture must always be practiced at a time that is peaceful and without distractions.

It is best to explore the correct pressure for your horse when doing a Yin-Yang Balancing. If you use the Yin-Yang Balancing to successfully relax your horse, you've discovered the right amount of pressure to use at the points. Now, you're ready to apply further acupuncture. As you work, always pay attention to the activity of the horse's ears and his facial expression.

In the case that you choose an incorrect acupuncture point, apply a Yin-Yang Balancing for the next few days and then choose different acupuncture points going forward.

Negative Environmental Influences

Even if a horse responds positively to acupuncture, he can still be negatively influenced by an incompatible neighbor in the barn, poor saddle fit, an incorrectly adjusted bridle, too little turnout, etc. It should always be a high priority to optimize the horse's environment.

Acupressure Points – Description and Effects



Lung 7 (LU 7)

Lieque – Broken Sequence

Effects:

- Supports the lungs in the distribution of lung qi and moves the lung qi downward
- Moves defensive qi
- Establishes contact with functional cycle of the large intestine
- Opens the conception vessel
- Opens the nose and helps with allergies
- Distributes the skin's moisture and eliminates outer pathogenic factors from the skin's surface

Location:

- Inside the foreleg
- One hand-width over the knee joint on the front edge of the radius (forearm)



Explanation:

The lungs control the skin, through which defensive *qi* flows. In the early stages of infectious illness, *wei qi* can be bolstered through a point combination of LU 7 and LI 4. Subsequently, the immune system is strengthened. For horses with chronic coughing, LU 7 helps the lung *qi* to move downward in the body to the kidneys. The kidneys regulate *qi* for the entire body and can themselves be supported at acupressure point KI 3. For horses that tend to get sick in the spring rather than the winter, GB 20 should also be treated with acupressure.

Patient Example:

A respiratory infection broke out at a riding stable. The owner wished to support those horses that had not yet become sick by fortifying their bodies' defenses.

One mare, Lotta, was a *pi* type. She received one acupuncture treatment. Over the next week, the owner applied acupressure at LU 7, SP 6, ST 36, and LI 4. Lotta came down with a fever that lasted only one day, from which she recovered quickly and required no further treatment.



LI 4 and LU 7 bolster the horse's ability to fight infection.

Stomach 36 (ST 36) *Zusanli* – Three Mile Point (aka Three More Miles on Foot)

Effects:

- Fortifies the qi and the blood
- Helps with all chronic illnesses
- Supports the stomach and spleen equally
- Distributes wind, moisture and cold
- Harmonizes nourishing qi and defensive qi
- Strengthens the body
- Reduces edema
- Increases yang
- Remedies digestive problems
- Increases appetite

- Clears the eyes

Location:

- On the outside of the hind leg
- A hand-width below the stifle, beside the *crista tibiae*



Explanation:

The main job of the stomach is to break down nourishment and allow it to mature. The stomach qi normally travels downward. The nutrition is passed along to the small intestine. In horses, a reversal of the stomach qi's flow causes cribbing. Cribbing can be healed if it occurs as the consequence of an internal illness. If the cribbing is present as a stereotypical behavior, it is typically only possible to stop it temporarily.

Together with the spleen, the stomach is the root of post-heaven qi. Both are responsible for the collective qi that the body manufactures after birth. If not

enough qi is produced, the horse will be lethargic and weak.



SP 6 strengthens the “center” and supports the pi type.

ST 36 is an imposing point. This point should enable an exhausted runner to rally and go three more miles. In equestrian sport, acupuncture is applied at this point just before a race, facilitating enormous performance capability. For chronic respiratory problems or loss of appetite, ST 36 should always be included in treatment. In addition, ST 36 can enhance defensive qi at the beginning of an illness, thereby strengthening the immune system.

The stomach meridian also has a healing influence on the eyes, via point ST 1, which is located on the lower eyelid (p. 91). The stomach is responsible for taking in fluids.

In combination with SP 6, point ST 36 can help horses with stocked-up legs to alleviate the edema. Because the stomach meridian travels over the stifle, pain in this joint is also treated using ST 36.

Patient Example:

Four-year-old mare, Elba, suffered from recurring colic. When injected with pain

relievers, Elba was always quick to recover from these bouts with colic, but they happened once every 10 days or so. The mare received one acupuncture treatment. The colic symptoms never returned. As a precautionary measure, Elba's owner applied acupressure at ST 36 and SP 6 for the next three weeks in order to stabilize her horse's "center."



By smoothing qi flow in the stomach meridian, ST 36 can relieve the tendency toward colic symptoms.

Gallbladder 20 (GB 20) *Fengchi* – Wind Pool

Effects:

- Eliminates outer and inner wind
- Clears the eyes
- Supports liver yang
- Eliminates heat
- Connection point to an extraordinary meridian, the yang heel vessel

- Relieves pain in the neck and stiffness at the poll

Location

- Behind the ears
- At the base of the ear muscle



Explanation:

Horses do not have gallbladders but they do have gallbladder meridians. Acupressure is applied to GB 20 in combination with LI 4 or LU 7 as a preventive measure against infectious diseases. Many horses do not like to be touched behind their ears. GB 20 can help with poll pain. In addition, this point should always be included with Yin-Yang Balancing and acupressure of the eyes.

In the case that a *gan* type experiences chronic, reoccurring conjunctivitis of the eyes, GB 20 should be combined with LV 3.

A poorly fitting halter or bridle always leads to a block of qi flow in the

gallbladder meridian. Therefore, it is crucial to check whether the poll piece fits too tightly when the horse bends at the poll. If it is too tight, the bridle should be adjusted to allow a looser fit and the poll piece should be padded with fleece.

Gallbladder 41 (GB 41) *Zulinqi* – Foot Falling Tears

Effects:

- Harmonizes the flow of liver qi
- Eliminates dampness and heat
- Opens the belt vessel – *dai mai*

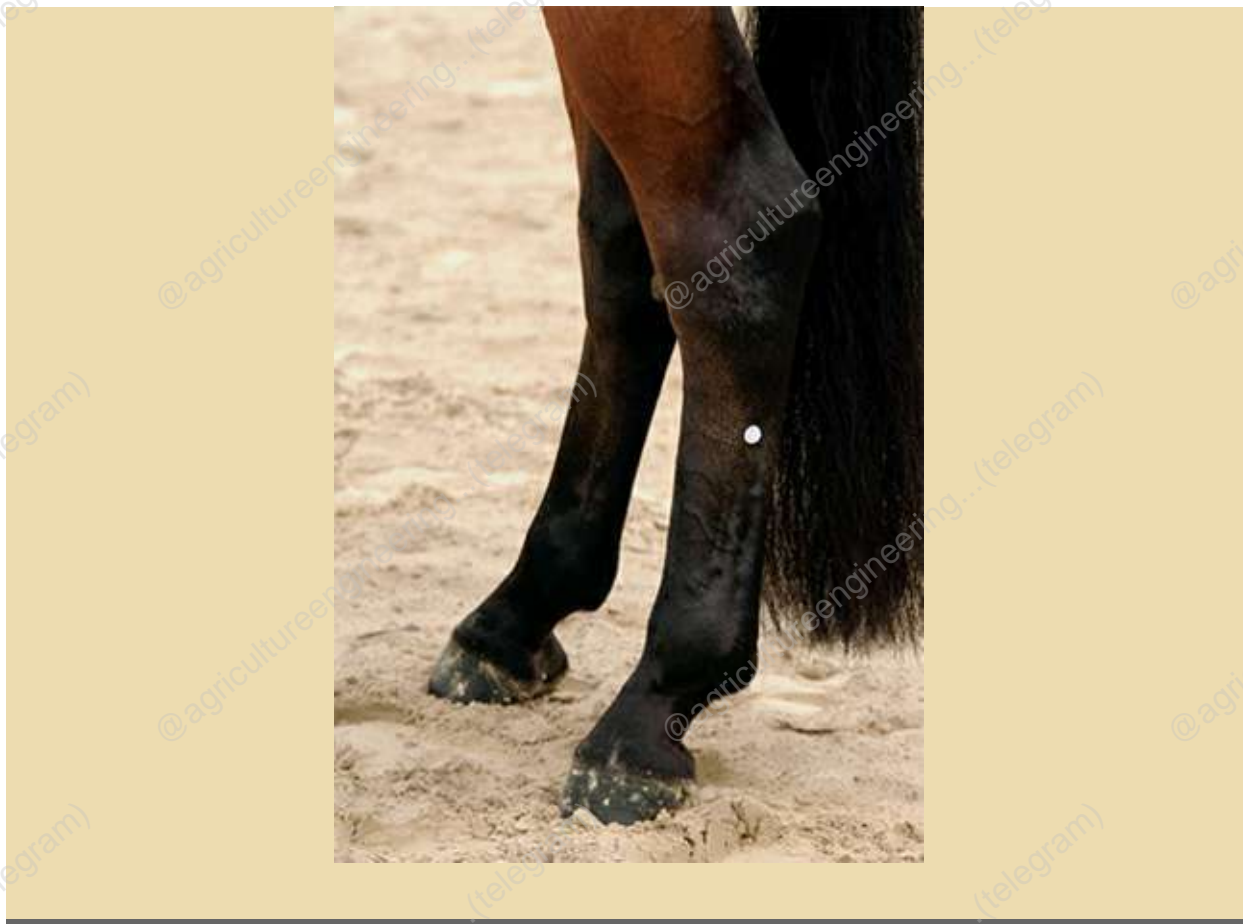
Explanation:

Zulinqi is extremely important in acupuncture and acupressure for horses. The belt vessel is an extraordinary meridian, whose job it is to connect the hindquarters with the forehead. If this meridian is blocked, the rider will not be able to establish a supple connection from the hindquarters to the forehead.

Every time acupressure is applied, the first step is to check whether the *dai mai* is free. If not, GB 41 can be treated to resolve the blockage. In addition, acupressure at GB 41 can help when painful meridian blockages affect the stifle and hip regions. GB 41 harmonizes the flow of liver qi. A blockage in liver qi can be the source of muscular tension and will be positively influenced by acupressure at GB 41.

Location

- On the outside of the hind leg
- Beneath the hock
- Behind the splint bone



Patient Example:

Little Brownie is a five-year-old liver chestnut gelding of *shen* type who is very willing under saddle. However, his owner has the feeling that he is not coming through properly from the hindquarters.

This horse has a long, soft back and he recently grew a great deal. All of his *shu* points were sensitive to pressure. After acupuncture at GB 41, this sensitivity vanished, except at points BL 18 (p. 74) and BL 23 (pp. 76 & 79). Little Brownie received acupuncture at BL 23, LV 1, SP 9, and BL 1. His rider applied acupressure daily at GB 41 and KI 3 and also reduced her demands under saddle for the next eight weeks. By the second appointment, none of Little Brownie's *shu* points were sensitive to pressure.

In the following two years, Little Brownie experienced muscular tension in his back three more times, always in conjunction with a growth spurt. Each time, acupuncture and acupressure quickly helped the situation. The now nine-year-old exhibits no further problems at his routine appointments. We continue to monitor him once every three months.



Regular acupuncture keeps a shen type healthy.

Large Intestine 4 (LI 4) *Hegu* – Closed Valley or Union Valley

Effects:

- Powerful painkiller
- Resolves blocked qi in the large intestine meridian
- Supports the lungs in the delivery of qi
- Distributes outer and inner wind
- Channels heat out
- Opens the body's surface
- Functions as a far point for the head region
- Fortifies qi
- Harmonizes the rising of yang and descent of yin

Location

- Inside the foreleg
- Beneath the knee



Explanation:

LI 4 is an acupressure point with many diverse applications. It is a powerful pain reliever, useful for any condition that invokes pain but especially for poll pain and lameness of the forehead.

Because this point strongly affects the head region, acupuncture is also applied here for a runny nose, sinus infections, and laryngitis.

Likewise, LI 4 is treated to successfully relieve symptoms associated with allergies, such as allergy-induced bronchitis and allergic reactions of the skin.

Psychologically, LI 4 can be combined with LV 3 and GV 24 to relieve an anxious state of mind.



LV 3 lies to the inside of the hind leg.

The functions described above are all about outward channeling and calming.

LI 4 can also build up and stimulate when used in combination with ST 36 (fortifies qi and blood). According to the Chinese view, a functional cycle is formed between the large intestine, as the yang organ, and the lungs, as the yin organ. LI 4 helps the lungs with distribution of *wei qi* (the body's defensive ability). Therefore, this acupressure point is treated in the beginning stages of respiratory infection.

This combination can be applied once a week in the month of September, as a preventive measure.



ST 36 strengthens the immune system.

Spleen Pancreas 21 (SP 21) *Dabao* – General Control

Effects:

- Moves blood through its vessels

Explanation:

For people, *dabao* is used to relieve general muscular pain. For horses, this acupressure point is used to treat extreme sensitivity of the skin.

Some horses do not like to be touched. When being tacked, they react unwillingly when they first feel the girth. *Dabao* can be put to excellent use for these overreactive horses. Daily, as part of the tacking up process, you can use your fist or the ball of your hand to apply acupressure at this point.

Location

- Behind the shoulder, in the girth area
- Beneath the shoulder blades



Patient Example:

Melody, a three-year-old mare, was going to be backed for the first time. She was a likable, trusting horse. Melody accepted the bridle easily and quickly learned to longe in both directions. Her trainer was very experienced at working with young horses. She noticed that Melody did not really enjoy being groomed. Feeling the girth the first time presented a problem — Melody panicked!



Oppositional behaviors in young horses often originate from insecurity and fear. In combination with acupuncture, acupressure removes the fear.

Using acupuncture needles, I applied a Yin-Yang Balancing and then also applied acupressure at SP 21. While acupressure was applied, the mare was able to be groomed without resistance. For 10 days, the trainer applied acupressure at SP 21, using her left fist to do so. Simultaneously, she groomed Melody with her right hand. On the eleventh day, the trainer began laying a longeing surcingle on the mare, all the while applying acupressure at SP 21. After five more days, Melody allowed herself to be girthed up in the surcingle without any fuss. The saddle was then introduced using this same method and there were no further problems.

Bladder 10 (BL 10) ***Tianzhu – Celestial Pillar***

Effects:

- Channels wind out

- The point of the ocean of qi
- Clears the brain
- Soothes the eyes
- Eliminates pain deep in the back muscles
- Resolves blockages in the bladder meridian

Location

- Side of the neck
- On the wing of the atlas of the first cervical vertebra
- One hand-width below the roots of the mane



Explanation:

Like LI 4 and GB 20, acupressure point BL 10 expels outer wind and is used to treat poll pain.

Some horses quickly learn individual movements, but get confused when the

rider asks for multiple movements back to back. These horses have problems with concentration. *Tianzhu* lies at the point where the bladder meridian exits the brain. It is a rallying point for qi. For this reason, treating BL 10 stimulates concentration and memory. This is especially true for *shen* types, who should then also receive acupressure at KI 3 (supports the kidney qi).

This point can be treated to dissolve blockages in the bladder meridian, which runs within the back muscles. Therefore, acupressure is applied at BL 10 to treat pain in the deep musculature of the back.

Large Intestine 16 (LI 16)

Jugu – Giant Bone

Effects:

- Diagnostic acupressure point
- Helps to send the lung qi down the body
- Moves qi and blood
- Loosens backups in the large intestine
- Influences the joints

Location

- In front of the shoulder
- Using your hand, grasp the *brachiocephalic* muscle from beneath. Spread your thumb away from your index finger and press into the deep spot.



Explanation:

An examination of acupressure point *jugu* helps to determine if there is tension in the neck area. The thumb, which encircles the *brachiocephalic muscle*, presses slowly and with steadily increasing pressure deep in the base of the neck. If the examination is done too quickly and roughly, every horse will react with defensive movements and the diagnostic value is lost.

LI 16 is a popular acupressure point. For acupressure, the point should be treated for at least one to two minutes in order to have an effect.



LI 4 (pictured here) and SP 6 are treated to complement LI 16 during recovery from an operation on a joint.

Jugu relaxes local tension in the shoulder and neck regions. In addition, this point helps unblock the large intestine meridian and influences the function of the joints. For this reason, LI 16 is treated in combination with LI 4 and SP 6 during recovery from an operation on a joint.

Patient Example:

Leander, a seven-year-old stallion trained through Third Level dressage, was referred over by a veterinary clinic. When introduced to mares, he showed no stud-like behaviors. Since the age of five, Leander would suddenly get a kink in his neck area when he was ridden. As a result, the stallion would suddenly stop and stand. He would not move forward and could not lift his neck. This would last about 20 minutes, after which the horse could move normally again. However, on one of the last occurrences, Leander did not get better right away and, in fact, he stayed in this condition for 18 hours. Medication did not help. Since then, the problem has only occurred for short periods of time, but more and more frequently and always while he is being ridden. Chiropractic treatment failed to help. Examinations at the veterinary hospital unfortunately did not yield a diagnosis.



Acupuncture must be used for problems with metabolic bone disorders.

Leander is a *shen* type. His Chinese kidneys were weak. This was especially apparent in his lack of sex drive. The kidneys are responsible for bone growth. This stallion had a weak foundation. We treated him with acupuncture at SP 9, BL 11 (governing point for the bones), and LI 16. BL 23 (pp. 76 & 79) received moxibustion therapy, meaning mugwort was attached to the needle, lit, and smoldered. While LI 16 had a needle inserted, Leander's strange kink and its accompanying movement problems suddenly occurred. After the treatment, he was able to move normally, much to the relief of his owner! The kink and resulting blocked movement has never happened again.

Bladder 60 (BL 60) *Kunlun* – Kunlun Mountain

Effects:

- Resolves bladder meridian blockages

- Channels wind out
- Loosens the tendons
- Disposes of heat
- Animates the blood
- Strengthens the poll, neck and back

Location

- On the outside of the hind leg
- On the hock
- In between the point of hock and lower leg



Explanation:

With 67 acupressure points, the bladder meridian is the longest channel in the body. It begins at the inside corner of the eye and ends on the outside of the hind leg, above the coronary band. *Kunlun* can remove blockages along the bladder

meridian; at the same time, channeling out wind (relieving pain). For this reason, it is treated when chronic back pain is the issue.

This point acts as a far point to influence poll pain when used in combination with GB 20. *Kunlun* removes heat and moves blood; therefore, acupuncture needles are applied here to treat infections of the bladder and uterus.

Patient Example 1:

Larinus is a nine-year-old chestnut gelding. Sudden, very severe lameness in his left hind leg brought him to the clinic for an examination. However, no diagnosis was reached. It was noteworthy that his back musculing had recently regressed, immensely and rapidly.



LV 3 calms the horse and relaxes the muscles.

Larinus received acupuncture a total four times. Afterward, he could move well enough that we confidently turned him out to pasture. Unfortunately, once turned out, Larinus tore around so much that he made the lameness worse again. Despite my concerns, his owner insisted on carrying on with turnout and therapy as planned. To support the acupuncture, the owner applied acupressure every other

day at points BL 60 and BL 1, along with a Yin-Yang Balancing. If she felt Larinus looked especially boisterous, she also applied acupressure at LV 3. Over the course of the next six months, the horse's back musculature built back up again and the lameness improved. Acupuncture was supplemented with herbal therapy. After one year, Larinus was sound and, to the great pleasure of his owner, rideable once more.

Patient Example 2:

Pünktchen, a 12-year-old gray, presented with a tense back. The upward transition to canter on the right lead was especially difficult for him.



Thanks in part to acupressure treatments given by his owner, Pünktchen is sound again.

Pünktchen received acupuncture; after that, his 11-year-old owner applied acupressure at *kunlun* and LV 3, *taichong*, every other day. In addition, she treated him using a Yin-Yang Balancing. Three weeks later, at Pünktchen's follow-up appointment, he no longer had difficulties.

The young rider continued to apply acupressure once a week at *kunlun* and GB 41, *zulinqi*. I now monitor Pünktchen once every three months, but have not had to

treat him again with acupuncture, except once when he came down with a respiratory infection.

Small Intestine (SI 3)

Houxi – Back Creek

Effects:

- Key point of the governing vessel, *du mai*
- Channels wind out
- Supports tendons and muscles
- Eliminates moisture
- Gets rid of jaundice
- Stabilizes the spirit

Location

- On the outside of the foreleg
- Above the fetlock joint
- Below the tip of the splint bone



Explanation:

Like GB 41, acupressure point SI 3 is an opener to an extraordinary meridian: namely, the *du mai* or governing vessel. This vessel originates in the uterus and travels to the space between the anus and sheath on the body's surface. It runs over the middle of the base of the tail, over the croup, and then over the spinal processes of the vertebrae all the way to the nostrils.

SI 3 channels inner wind out of the *du mai*, which means this point influences ailments such as cramping, ataxia, and tension at the poll.

As a far point, *houxi* works on poll pain and can be combined with GB 20, for example.

SI 3 will have a positive influence on muscular pain and tendon problems along the path of the governing vessel, as well as on the large intestine and bladder meridians. For this reason, back tension, especially in acute stages, is often treated using this acupressure point.

When an acupuncturist treats point BL 62, *shenmai*, together with SI 3, she can activate the governing vessel. In most cases, sensitivity to pressure along the *du mai* disappears within seconds after acupuncture needles are inserted at these

points.

SI 3 supports the building of self-esteem and can be used in combination with KI 3, *taixi*.

Patient Example:

Ticiano is an eight-year-old brown gelding. Since the age of five, he braced so tightly and repetitively on his right side that cantering on the right lead was impossible for him. As soon as this resistance began, Ticiano lost his former forward way of going and could only be positioned through the poll with great difficulty. Administering pain medicine had no influence on the blockage. During this period, the owner worked Ticiano on the longe line only, until he would again transition willingly to the canter.

An osteopathic treatment led to an improvement of the situation. However, the rider had to continue to ride very strategically in order to execute a right-hand turn. We treated Ticiano twice with acupuncture. He also received acupressure at points SI 3, BL 60 (for chronic back pain), BL 10 (clears the bladder meridian), and LV 3 (eases the back muscles and calms the mind). Progress was gradual and the owner had the feeling that she had the best success when she applied acupressure for at least two minutes per point before her ride.



Ticiano responded slowly to acupressure on individual points. Each point required two minutes of acupressure.

Closing Comments



Closing Comments

If the explanations put forth allow you to better manage certain situations or more easily answer the questions that arise in your dealings with horses, then this book has served its purpose.

With help from the descriptions provided, you can determine to which of the five types your horse belongs. This insight will make day-to-day interactions with your horse easier, thereby increasing the enjoyment and fun of this wonderful activity. Owners, riders, veterinarians, acupuncturists, and practitioners of acupressure all have something to contribute to a horse's well-being. If each of these individuals gives just a little, our combined efforts will yield a sound, happy, and balanced horse. This is our reward.



An overview of all the acupressure points described in this book.

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Chengjiang Page 88

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