



# feeling GOOD & READY

*Get your performance horse raring to go  
with a little help from equine acupressure.*

*By Amy Snow and Nancy Zidonis*

The horse is an **AMAZING ATHLETE**. Because of his speed, adaptability and athleticism, he is our companion in many disciplines. His powerful muscle tissue comprises anywhere from 45% to 55% of his body mass, depending on the breed. In addition to all his physical attributes, the horse's intelligence makes him our most treasured domesticated large animal, and he shares our passion for equine sports.

## **SURVIVAL INSTINCTS**

This is all so very true when the horse is feeling good and in tip-top condition, mentally and physically. Horses can play tricks on us, though. They are good at not revealing discomfort until they are desperately in pain. In the wild, horses are left behind to fend for themselves when they can't keep up with herd. Without the protection of the herd, they perish. That's why horses are hard wired to appear sound for as long as possible. This means we won't know our horses are experiencing pain during the early stages of a problem, unless it's an obvious traumatic event.

Repetitive injuries affecting the muscles, tendons and ligaments are often difficult to detect because of their gradual onset. Suddenly, you're surprised to find your horse is limping. Once this occurs, you've lost the opportunity to address the damage when it began – and when it would have been much easier to resolve. Then again, maybe your horse did give you subtle indications that he was not 100% sound, but you weren't able to recognize them.

## **SUBTLE SIGNS**

Watch for a change in attitude of any sort – this is often the first sign of a physical problem. A horse's inability to do something he did easily last week does not usually mean a need for more training – it often means something hurts. Stumbling, shortness of breath, trouble turning, poor recovery from exercise, and any lameness are other telltale indicators something is wrong.

Competition can bring out the best and worst in a horse. There are so many issues that can affect equine performance. Every anatomical

system has the potential to break down, whether genetically, through wear and tear, or stress. Musculoskeletal system issues are not necessarily traumatic in nature. Degenerative joint disease (DJD), navicular disease, and various degrees of muscle soreness tend to have a gradual onset.

## **PREVENTIVE CARE**

Don't dismiss even a slight decline in your horse's performance. Even if it seems minor, pay attention to the hints he's giving you. Head tossing, refusing to jump, a raspy sound to his breathing, an inability to settle while tacking up...any of these behaviors could mean something.

There are courses of action you can take to assure your horse's comfort and soundness. Professional trainers will tell you to provide a warm-up period before exercise to prevent soft tissue stress and injury. Have your holistic veterinarian perform a thorough check of your horse's respiratory, cardiovascular, gastrointestinal, and nervous systems before heading into heavy training. Add hoof and dental checks to your list, too. The equine athlete deserves this level of care and respect.

It's no fun for either of you when your sporting season is cut short by injury or disease. Staying happy and healthy is the goal. To that end, offering your horse a general acupressure session to help him feel good year round is another valuable step to take.

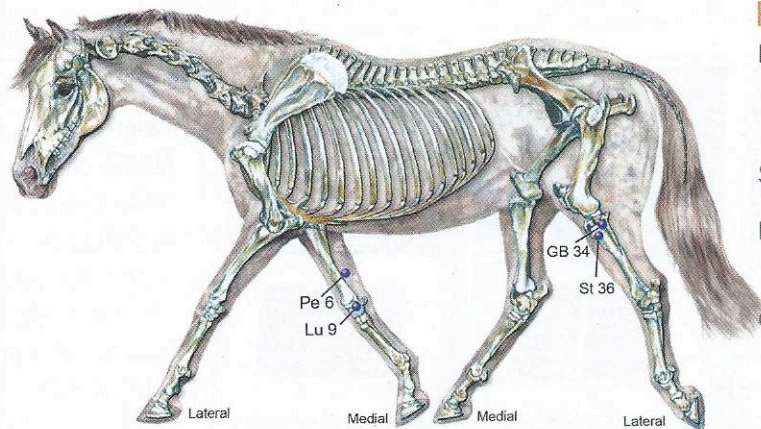
## **A FEEL-GOOD ACUPRESSURE SESSION**

Because you rely on your equine athlete, you want him to feel good and ready for training, competition, or simple trail riding. Acupressure makes this possible by providing him with an optimal flow of energy and blood through his body.

Specific acupressure points, also called "acupoints", have a particular effect on anatomical systems. These acupoints help bring chi (life-promoting energy) and nourishing blood to the horse's bodily tissues and organs so they can function optimally and help him perform at his best.



## ACUPOINTS FOR FEELING GOOD



### POINT LOCATION

Lu 9	Located on medial aspect of foreleg, between the 1 <sup>st</sup> and 2 <sup>nd</sup> row of carpal bones, just in front of the accessory carpal bone.
St 36	Just lateral to the tibial crest.
Pe 6	Medial aspect of foreleg, directly in front of the mid-level of the chestnut.
GB 34	Found in front of and below the head of the fibula, between the tibia and fibula.

- For instance, the acupoint called "Lung 9" (Lu 9) depicted on the chart with this article is known to promote lung health.
- **Stomach 36 (St 36)** supports the gastrointestinal system and enhances the flow of chi.
- **Gall Bladder 34 (GB 34)** is considered the influential point for tendons and ligaments and has a profound effect on the flexibility of those tissues.
- **Pericardium 6 (Pe 6)** helps with cardiovascular function, mental calming and focus.

Offer this general "FEELING GOOD" acupressure session when grooming your horse, and you'll be able to enjoy your chosen sport together for many years. 🐾

Nancy Zidonis and Amy Snow are the authors of *Equine Acupressure: A Working Manual*, *Acu-Dog: A Guide to Canine Acupressure* and *Acu-Cat: A Guide to Feline Acupressure*. They founded Tallgrass offering books, manuals, DVDs, apps for mobile devices, and meridian charts. They also provide hands-on and online training courses worldwide, including a 330-hour Practitioner Certification Program. Tallgrass is an approved school for the Dept. of Higher Education through the State of Colorado, an approved provider of NCBTMB CEs, and accepted by NCCAOM. 888-841-7211, [animalacupressure.com](mailto:animalacupressure.com), [Tallgrass@animalacupressure.com](mailto:Tallgrass@animalacupressure.com)

### PERFORMING AN ACUPRESSURE SESSION

*Chinese medicine practitioners have been helping animals feel and perform their best by stimulating the acupoints described in this article, and others. Using the soft tip of your thumb or pointer finger, apply gentle pressure on the acupoint shown in the chart. Rest your other hand comfortably on your horse. Slowly count to 30 before moving to the next acupoint. Place your fingers on the acupoints on one side of your horse before working on the other side.*

*While you are stimulating these acupoints, your horse may give signs that indicate more chi and blood are circulating through his body. These include licking, a softening of the eye, stretching, shaking, passing air, and even sleeping. If your horse gives any indication he is not comfortable with a point, just move to the next.*

*There's no benefit to discomfort during an acupressure session.*