

An acupressure session for SENIOR HORSES

By Amy Snow & Nancy Zidonis

Help your senior horse cope with the uncomfortable side effects of aging with this gentle acupressure session.

"The ole gray mare, she ain't what she used to be." True, but who is? Age takes its toll on all of us, including our beloved horses. We tend to think of them as fit and active, but one day they suddenly look older. The hollow above the eye seems deeper, muscles look less toned and full, whiskers sprout on the muzzle, and the gait appears stiff — and then we remember ten years have passed. These seniors have become our dear old friends, and we want to do everything we can to extend their lives. Acupressure is one way to help your older horse deal with the aging process more comfortably.

SENIOR HORSES NEED TO KEEP MOVING

The equine body is designed to move, and seniors are no exception. However, many older horses are reluctant to keep moving because they are in pain. Arthritis is common. Joints, tendons and ligaments can be sore due to inflammation and degeneration. Unfortunately, once the body slows down, the potential for disease goes up. Hence, techniques to reduce pain and promote movement are paramount.

LIFESTYLE AND ACUPRESSURE

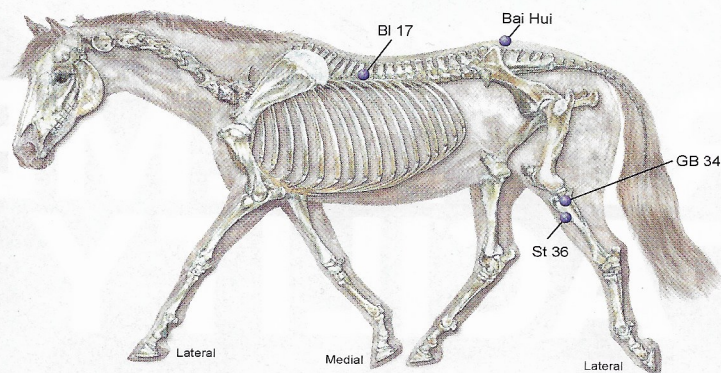
To help avoid pain, you can support your senior horse by maintaining a

healthy lifestyle. This could mean turnout with other horses, low-stress trail riding or training in the arena, basic dental and physical healthcare, and attention to diet. Horses need consistent physical activity for a healthy digestive process. Body movement enhances nutrient absorption, which in turn nourishes muscles, joints, and soft tissues so they maintain strength and flexibility.

Adding an acupressure session to your grooming routine can greatly increase your senior horse's comfort level and capacity for exercise. Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) has been used for thousands of years to stave off the painful effects of arthritis, gastrointestinal issues, and other conditions associated with aging.

Specific acupressure points are known to help maintain tendon, ligament and joint flexibility, enhance the digestive process, and support the horse's spirit. During your grooming routine, you can stimulate four key acupressure points (see chart) on both sides of your senior horse. When performed regularly, this session will help her stay as healthy as she can be and may even extend her longevity.

Acupressure for Equine Aging



Point	Location
BI 17	Approximately 3 inches lateral to the dorsal midline in the 12 th intercostal space.
Bai Hui	At the lumbosacral space, on the dorsal midline
St 36	Located on the outside of the hind leg, below the patella.
GB 34	Found between the fibula and the tibia between the long and lateral digital extensor, in front of and below the head of the fibula.

Signs of aging

Each horse is unique in how he or she ages. It depends on lifelong circumstances, breeding, mental attitude and individual constitution. Here are some common indicators:

- ▶ Vision deteriorates
- ▶ Muscle tone and strength decrease
- ▶ Posture appears more sway-backed
- ▶ Lower lip droops and is less flexible
- ▶ Emotional "flatness" and loss of spirit
- ▶ Loss of teeth and dental issues
- ▶ Dehydration occurs more frequently
- ▶ Kidney and bladder conditions occur more often
- ▶ Reduced appetite signals potential nutrient absorption problems
- ▶ Gait appears stiffer due to tendon, ligament, joint, and bone issues
- ▶ Coat lacks luster with increased dryness, patchiness, and graying

Amy Snow and Nancy Zidonis are the authors of *ACU-HORSE: A Guide to Equine Acupressure*, *ACU-DOG: A Guide to Canine Acupressure* and *ACU-CAT: A Guide to Feline Acupressure*. They founded Tallgrass Animal Acupressure Resources offering books, manuals, DVDs, apps, meridian charts. Contact: 303-681-3030, animalacupressureresources.com, tallgrass@animalacupressure.com