

# Joint Health and Equine Acupressure

By Amy Snow & Nancy Zidonis,  
Founders of Tallgrass Animal Acupressure Resources

Every sport horse needs strong healthy joints. We ask a lot of our horses -- whether it's jumping, climbing mountains, stopping short, spinning, or pulling a cart -- and the risk of short-term injury or long-term damage is always there. Taking an integrative approach can help you maintain the strength and flexibility of your horse's joints.

Horse people know that breeding plays a huge role in a horse's overall structural development and soundness. Trainers tell us about proper training and conditioning techniques, which are essential during every stage in the horse's life. Diet is of the utmost importance, while veterinary assessment and early detection of joint issues are critical. Experts in all these fields can give you a treasure trove of information about how to best care for your horse's joints and prevent injury.

Giving your horse an acupressure-massage session twice a week is something you can do on your own to support his joints. Acupressure is non-invasive, safe, always available, deceptively gentle, yet powerful. Horses are highly receptive to acupressure-massage. For over 3,000 years, these bodywork techniques have been proven through clinical observation to enhance equine health and performance.

## Equine Joints

By definition, a joint is the site of the junction or union of two or more bones. The primary function of joints is to provide for growth, motion, and flexibility of the skeletal frame.

The horse's joints are made up of at least two bones covered by smooth, interfacing cartilage, synovial fluid, and ligaments binding the joint together. The equine athlete's joints must articulate properly and withstand a huge amount of impact. Miraculously, these joints are structurally designed to flex, and serve as amazing shock absorbers.

However, repetitive wear and tear, a sudden impact injury, a ligament

tear or instability, and/or joint disease can put an end to a horse's career and to your enjoyment of equine sports or even leisure hacking. As tough as horses are, we are responsible for protecting them and preventing as much pain and suffering as possible.

## Acupressure-Massage for Joint Health

Specific acupressure points, also called "acupoints", help nourish and balance the structural components of the horse's joints -- including bones, cartilage, synovial fluid and ligaments. By gently placing your thumb on the acupoints shown in the chart, you are bringing chi (life-promoting energy), nourishing blood, and essential body fluids to the tissues.

Ligaments are responsible for holding the bones of the joints together. They need sufficient nourishment to remain supple and strong enough to flex and hold the joint in alignment. The smooth cartilage covering the surface of the connecting bones, along with the synovial joint fluid, must receive nutrients and chi to sustain their capacity to move smoothly and absorb impact to the joint.

By offering your equine athlete acupressure-massage sessions two times a week, you will support his ability to stay sound, preventing injury while extending his years of comfort and well-being, and your enjoyment of your chosen sport.



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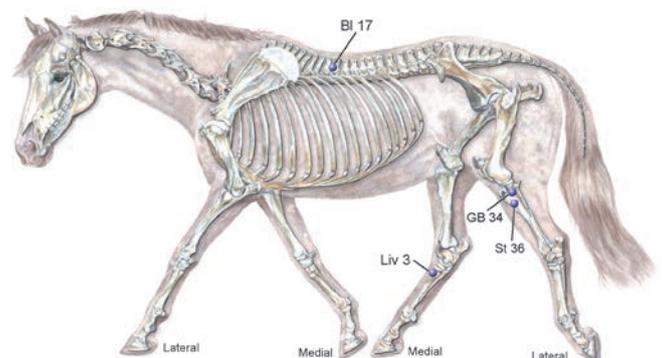
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## Acupoints for Joint Health



| Point | Location  |
|-------|---|
| St 36 | Located one finger width from the head of the fibula, on the lateral side of the tibia.   |
| Bi 17 | Three cun lateral to the dorsal midline in the 12 <sup>th</sup> intercostal space.  |
| GB 34 | Found at the interosseous (between 2 bones) space between the tibia and fibula, between the long and lateral digital extensors, cranial and distal to the head of the fibula. |
| Liv 3 | Found on the craniodistal aspect of the cannon bone at the level of the head of the medial splint bone.   |

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## Acupressure-Massage Session

An acupressure-massage session includes acupoints that are specifically selected to support joint health. The following acupoints are known to enhance joint flexibility and strength.

Stomach 36 (St 36), Leg Three Miles, is used to nourish muscles, tendons, and ligaments with which strengthens the joints and increases their flexibility.

Bladder 17 (Bl 17), Diaphragm's Hollow, is the "Influential point" for blood. This means this acupoint influences and creates the nutrient-rich quality of the blood. The strength of the joint is dependent on nourishment.

Gall Bladder 34 (GB 34), Yang Mound Spring, directly influences the health of the horse's joints. It is known to bring chi energy and blood to all the tissues of the joint.

Liver 3 (Liv 3), Great Thoroughfare – the Liver organ system is directly responsible for the health of tendons and ligaments. As such, the acupoint, Liver 3, supports the essential chi, blood and essence needed to maintain the horse's joints.

## Hands-On Application

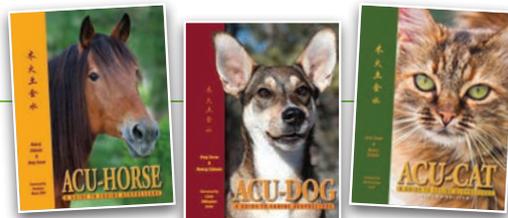
Chinese medicine practitioners have been helping horses feel and perform their best by stimulating these acupoints specifically for their joints. Using the soft tip of your thumb or pointer finger, apply gentle pressure on the acupoint shown in the chart. Rest your other hand comfortably on your horse.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

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

## CLINICAL SIGNS OF JOINT TRAUMA

- Lameness
- Exercise avoidance
- Gait changes
- Swelling
- Heat
- Audible clicking of the joint
- Pain response to touch

*Note: If any of the above conditions occur, immediately seek veterinary assessment and recommendations. Acupressure-massage is not a substitute for veterinary medical care.*



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, offering books, manuals, DVDs, apps, and meridian charts. Tallgrass also provides online training programmes worldwide.

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An advertisement for 'Wonder Joint' supplement. The background is a lush green field with trees in the distance. On the left, a dark brown horse stands facing right. On the right, a white dog wearing a straw hat sits facing left. A chain leash connects the horse's halter to the dog's collar. In the foreground, two white plastic tubs of 'Wonder Joint' are shown. The tub on the left is labeled 'EQUINE 100gms' and features a horse illustration. The tub on the right is labeled 'DOG' and features a dog illustration. The text 'Supports joints, ligaments, tendons and muscle soreness naturally...' is written in a large, white, serif font across the top right. The words 'WONDER JOINT' are printed in large, bold, white capital letters at the bottom right of the image.

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