



Lactation with Help from Acupressure

By Amy Snow & Nancy Zidonis

The vision of dam and foal nuzzling each other out in the meadow can take your breath away. It seems so natural, so serene. The foal is born with an innate desire to nurse. As soon as his gangly legs support him, he searches for the dam's udder. A healthy foal will begin to suckle within two hours of birth and will continue to nurse for 45 to 50 seconds four times an hour for the next few days.

The mare's ability to nourish her foal is critical for the young life. The foal needs to receive essential proteins and colostrum from his mother's rich, nourishing milk. This is how the foal obtains his initial antibodies to build his immune system. The balance of fats, proteins, and lactose (sugar) in the mare's milk is perfect for the foal's growth and development. Plus, a sufficient amount of milk is essential to maintain the dam-foal bonding process.

When the dam is calm, accepting, and protective of her foal all will likely go well. The availability of milk is a matter of demand and supply. That is, the more the foal bumps the mare's two teats and suckles the more milk the mare's four mammary glands will produce.

Keep a close eye on the dam and foal and consult your holistic veterinarian if you suspect nursing is not going well. Watch for indications the mare is struggling. Indicators are loss of a significant amount of weight, becomes weak or sick, avoids the foal, or acts aggressively toward the foal. Indications that the foal may not be receiving enough milk are infrequent urination, general dehydration, lack of interest in nursing, or lethargy. The situation can deteriorate and become dangerous quickly; contact your veterinarian immediately if any of these indicators arise.

There are specific acupressure points known to support the mare's capacity to produce a sufficient amount of milk for as long as her young needs to nurse. A few days after the birth, the mare often appreciates some personal attention. Take the opportunity to offer her a few acupressure points along with a relaxed grooming session.

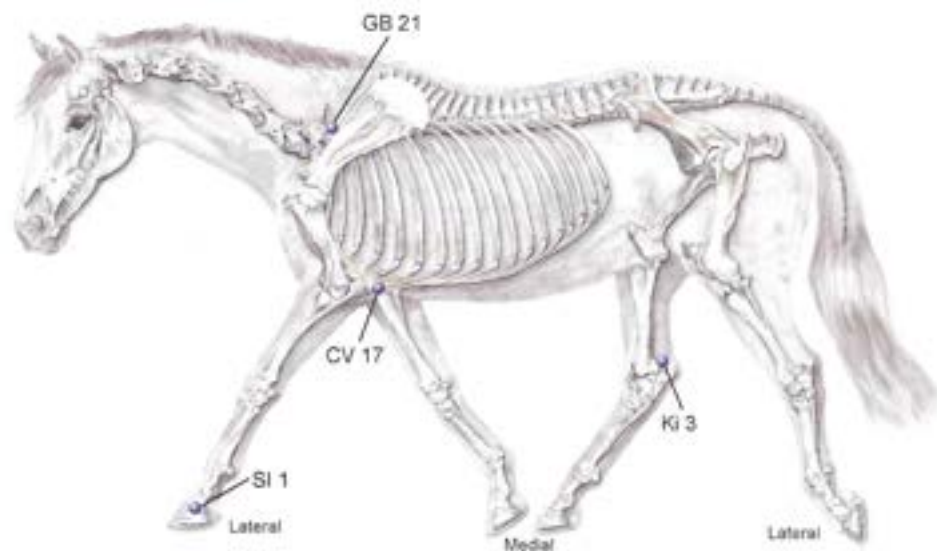
Acupressure to Support Lactation

Acupressure is a powerful, non-invasive, hands-on method of supporting equine health and wellbeing. This healing art and science is based on Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM). The brief acupressure session presented in the accompanying chart provides acupressure points, also called "acupoints," that have been used to enhance equine lactation for thousands of years.

Follow the chart and place the soft tip of your thumb on the first acupoint, Gall Bladder 21 (GB 21), at a 45-degree angle to the horse's body. Place your other hand comfortably on the horse. Breathe evenly and deeply while counting slowly to 30 before moving on to the second acupoint. Repeat this procedure on each of the acupoints presented in the chart. When you have completed the points on one side, perform the same procedure on the opposite side of your horse to complete the acupressure session.

You can offer this acupressure session for the entire time the foal is nursing. As the young horse moves on to eating grass hay, it will be time to let the mare cease lactating. Allow nature to take its course.

Acupressure Points to Support Lactation



Point	Location / Function
SI 1	Found on the craniolateral aspect of the front hoof proximal to the coronary band.
GB 21	Located at the midpoint of the cranial edge of the scapula.
KI 3	Found in a depression between medial malleolus of the tibia and and tendocalcaneus, at the level of the tip of the medial malleolus, skinniest part of hock.
CV 17	Found on the ventral midline at the level of the caudal border of the elbow.

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Amy Snow and Nancy Zidonis,
Founders of Tallgrass
Animal Acupressure Institute.

They 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 a 300-hour
hands-on and online training
program worldwide.

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