

ACUPRESSURE FOR HORSES

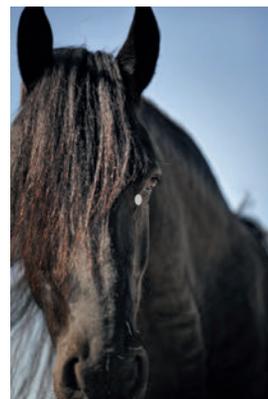
Hands-On Techniques to Solve Performance Problems
and Ease Pain and Discomfort

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

Dr. med. vet. Ina Gösmeier
Official Veterinarian of the German Dressage & Eventing Teams

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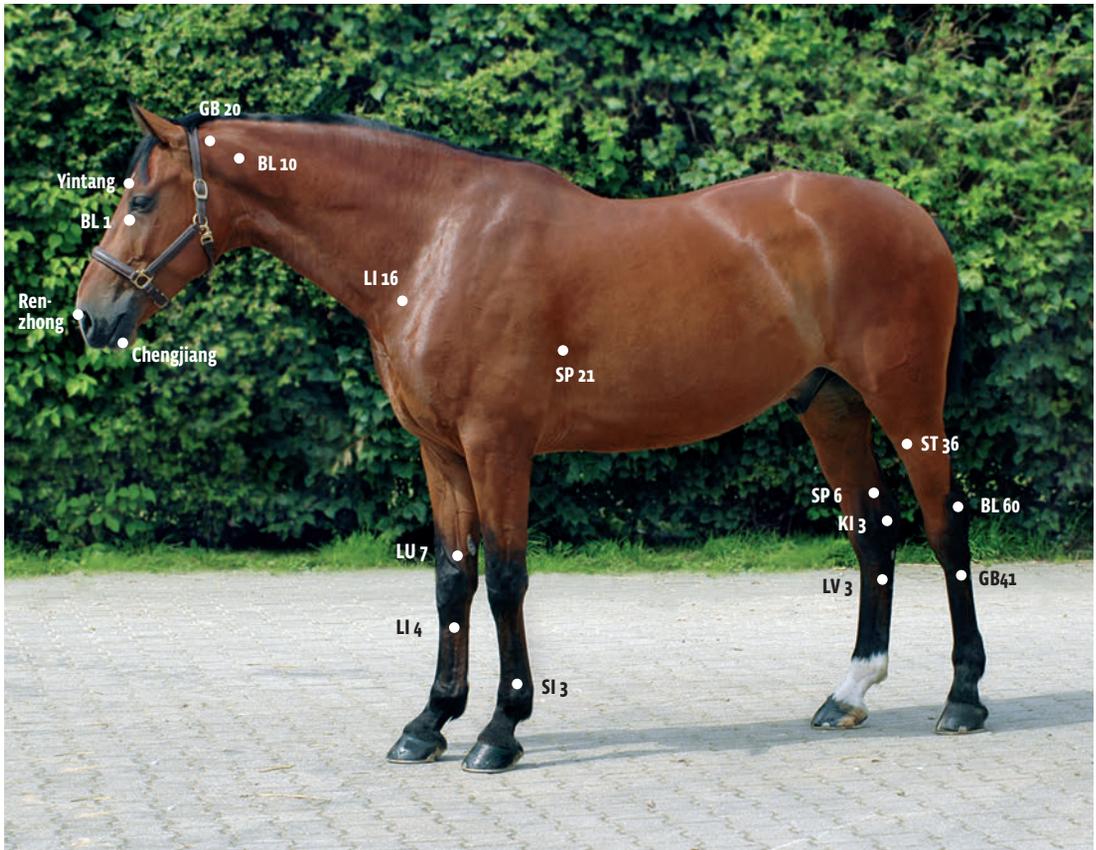
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The Application of Acupressure



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.

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.

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



- 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 acupressure, you can't be in a hurry!

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

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

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

.....
*Large Intestine 16 (LI 16),
Jugu, is used for both examina-
tion and therapy.*



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.

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).

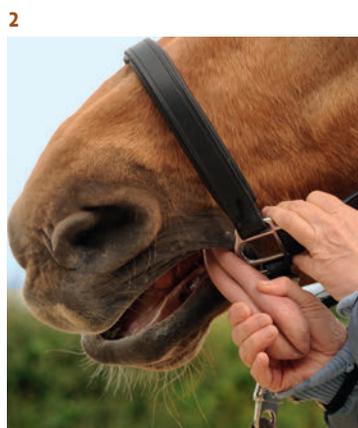
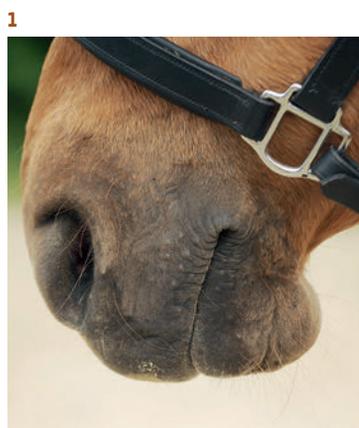


1 Gallbladder 20 (GB 20),
Fengchi

2 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.

4



- 1 *The mouth of a pi type*
- 2 *The pi type enjoys having his tongue taken hold of.*
- 3 *The shen type has a pale tongue and does not like having it grasped.*
- 4 *The mouth of a gan type is tense, the lips held together tightly.*