

Digestion dilemma

by Amy Snow
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How to create harmonious stomach chi

"If Stomach Chi is good; prognosis is good. If Stomach Chi is not good; prognosis is not good." This ancient Chinese saying could not be more apt when it comes to horses. As a grazing animal, a horse wants to eat at all times. If he doesn't, you know he's not feeling well.

In the wild, horses can travel 30 to 40 miles a day, stopping to graze along the way. This nomadic eating regime means they can select the type of grasses and flowers their bodies need and not deplete the balance of nutrients and resources. The herd moves from location to location, directed by their inherent wisdom of knowing their natural physical requirements.

Domesticated horses have to adapt to relatively limited physical activity and whatever quality or mix of grass hay is provided. Unfortunately, this often leads to problems such as colic – a word that strikes fear in every horse guardian's heart – and other gastrointestinal issues.

Without realizing it, we often compromise

the horse's digestive process. Horses are designed to graze with their necks extended to the ground so the grass must pass through the length of throat in small quantities before ever reaching the stomach. When a horse is fed from an elevated source, he is losing most of his capacity to break down the dry grass hay before it reaches his stomach. Being enclosed in a stall for an extended period also compromises his capacity to digest his feed since horses need to move and exercise to enhance their digestion.

How acupressure can help

Acupressure is based on Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) and has been used for thousands of years to maintain and build equine health. From the perspective of TCM, a smooth and harmonious flow of Stomach Chi (life-promoting energy) will help the horse create healthy, nutrient-rich blood and not fall prey to stomach disorders.

Each organ system has its own energetics which must be in balance for it to

HINT

When a horse is demonstrating any gastrointestinal distress, consult your holistic veterinarian immediately. Acupressure is used as a complement and not a substitute for responsible veterinary care.

function properly. The Stomach has a partner, the Spleen/Pancreas, that shares in the responsibilities of breaking food down into absorbable nutrients; this is called "ripening and rotting" and is basically a fermentation process. The nutrients derived from grass hay must be highly refined so they circulate in the blood and nourish the other internal organs, muscles, bones, and parts of the body. The Stomach and

Spleen/Pancreas must therefore work in concert to maintain a healthy horse.

The challenge is to prevent any energy imbalance within the Stomach and Spleen/Pancreas organ systems. You can do this by offering your horse an acupressure session that supports the healthful function of the entire gastrointestinal tract.

Acupoints for good digestion

Stomach 36, Leg Three Miles (St 36), is one of the most powerful acupoints on the horse's body and is known as the Master Point for the gastrointestinal system. It helps to maintain the balance of Chi for digestion.

Spleen 3, Great Brightness (Sp 3), benefits Spleen Yang Chi, regulates Stomach Yin Chi, and can reduce the possibility of food stagnation along the gastrointestinal track.

Spleen 4, Grandparent-Grandchild (Sp 4), is the Connecting Point linking the Stomach and Spleen energetic channels; it balances the Chi between the two partners.

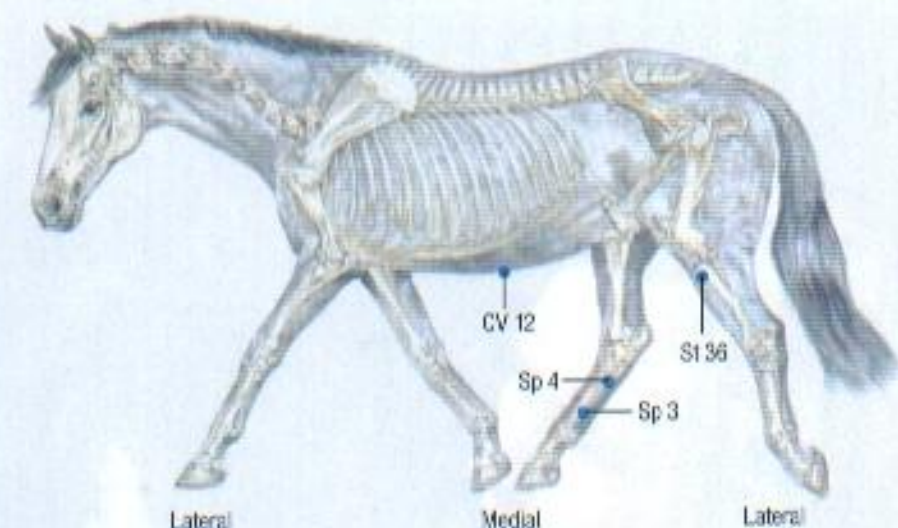
Conception Vessel 12, Sea of Power (CV 12) regulates, strengthens, and harmonizes the energy of the Stomach and Spleen/Pancreas.

Point work techniques

This acupressure session serves as part of a health maintenance program for horses.

Begin Point Work using the direct-thumb technique. Place the ball of your thumb on the acupoint at a 90° angle to your horse's body. Apply about one to two pounds of pressure; when you feel resistance, let up on the point slightly and then apply pressure again.

Keep both hands on the horse. One hand does the Point Work while the other feels the reactions such as muscle spasms, twitches and other releases. The



HARMONIOUS STOMACH CHI

Point	Location
St 36	One finger width from the head of the fibula, on the lateral side of the tibia.
Sp 3	Located on the distal end of the medial splint bone.
Sp 4	Located in a depression on the hind limb, just below the head of the medial splint bone.
CV 12	Found on the ventral midline, 1/2 way between the xiphoid and the umbilicus.

Horses are highly responsive to hands-on energetic work. By stimulating specific acupressure points, also called "acupoints," you can positively affect your horse's natural ability to maintain his own energetic balance.

hand not performing the Point Work can rest comfortably on the horse;

Point Work is generally performed from front to rear and from top to bottom of the horse.

Breathe out while moving into the acupoint; breathe in when letting up on the point. Stay on the point for the count of 30 or more. If the horse seems uncomfortable with a particular acupoint, move on and try it again at the next session.

Use partial body weight; this ensures smooth motion and protects your thumbs and wrists from stress.

Repeat this session once every five or six days to maintain a harmonious flow of Stomach and Spleen/Pancreas Chi.

The harmonious flow of Stomach Chi is key to a horse's wellbeing. By making this acupressure session part of your grooming routine, you can help ensure your own equine partner enjoys good GI health. 🐾

NANCY ZIGONIS AND AMY SNOW ARE THE AUTHORS OF *Equine Acupressure: A Working Manual*, *The Well-Connected Dog: A Guide To Canine Acupressure*, AND *Acu-Cat: A Guide to Feline Acupressure*. THEY OWN TALLGRASS PUBLISHERS, WHICH OFFERS MERIDIAN CHARTS FOR HORSES, DOGS, AND CATS, AND ACUPRESSURE VIDEOS. THEY ALSO PROVIDE HANDS-ON AND ONLINE TRAINING COURSES WORLDWIDE INCLUDING A PRACTITIONER CERTIFICATION PROGRAM. CALL 888-841-7211, VISIT WWW.ANIMALACUPRESSURE.COM OR EMAIL INFO@ANIMALACUPRESSURE.COM.