

Blazing Saddles: The Fire Phase

By Amy Snow and Nancy Zidonis

Every feature, every movement of these young horses emanates joyous vitality: a shockingly brilliant coat; full, articulating muscles; handsome, crisp-looking heads; sparkling eyes that bespeak quick intelligence. Their good, loving nature is the one thing that could possibly contain their burning, passionate nature. Their spirits soar with increasing physical strength in the warmth of summer. These are the perfect flesh and blood manifestation of the metaphor of Fire Phase of Transition in Traditional Chinese Medicine.

We have only to look at the magnificent animal balanced in the Fire Phase of Transition to understand the energetics of this "element". Watching a healthy horse in a summer pasture goading his mates to chase from one fence to the next can fill us with joy and awe. His eyes are flashing, his coat slick with sweat, every synchronous movement of his legs demonstrating the power of his entire body – he is Fire in body, mind, and motion.

To be on the back of such an animal is like no other experience. It is not only exhilarating, it is as if the horse is expressing and sharing all that it is to be Fire. There is such a visceral quality to the connection to the horse it truly feels like "blazing saddles".

Five Phases of Transition

In Chinese Medicine, the word *Wu* means "five" in English. The Chinese word *Zing* means "movement, change, transition, process" in English. *Wu Zing* can be translated to be The Five Phases of Transition to depict the concept of change and movement from one phase to another. The Five Phases are called: Wood, Fire, Earth, Metal and Water. Many western Chinese Medicine practitioners have come to call these basic constituents of nature "elements," thus calling this ancient Chinese Theory, The Five Element Theory.

Each of these constituents of nature has distinctly different energetic qualities and characteristics. For instance, in the cycle of life, Fire is associated with growth moving toward maturity. The season is the energy of summer, which is hot and expansive in nature. Crops grow rapidly in the heat of summer. This is a time of high energy just as the sun is at its highest point in the sky and the days are long. The emotion associated with the Fire Phase is joy because it is a feeling of expansiveness and warmth. There are four energetic pathways, or channels, known as "meridians", associated with Fire: Heart, Small Intestine, Pericardium (the sack surrounding the heart), and Triple Heater (the energetic organ system that regulates all the other organs in the body). Each of these organ systems per-



Two horses balanced in the Fire Phase of Transition, expressing and sharing all that it is to be Fire.

form important functions in maintaining the health and balance of the vital substances in the body: Chi, life-promoting energy, Blood (nutrient-rich fluids), and other Body Fluids.

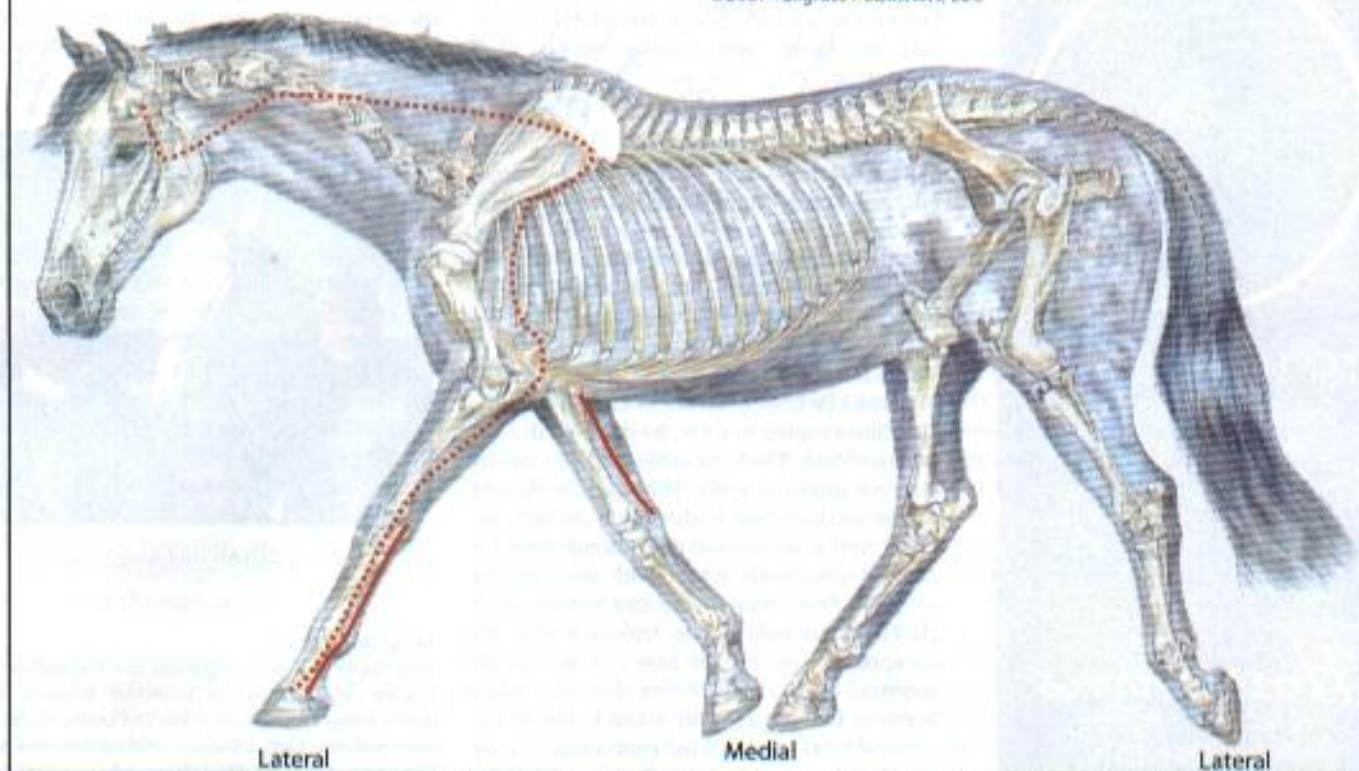
Contrast the Fire Phase with the Water Phase. The phase of life associated with Water is old age leading to death. Water is associated with energy of winter when it is cold and the natural environment is dormant and contracted. There is little light during the short day. The emotion of Water is fear, which is a necessary emotion for survival, but it is very tense and stressful. And, the meridians associated with the Water Phase are Kidney and Bladder, which are directly related to the water metabolism of the horse.

The intention behind the Five Phases of Transition when applied to medicine was to be able to identify different qualities of energy and health issues. Fire and Water, along with the other three phases, are metaphors that help us see and understand these different energetic qualities. It is as important to have an intellectual understanding of these Phases as it is to have a sense perception of them.

The young, healthy, balanced horse gives us such a vivid vision of all that is intended in the Fire Phase analogy. As he grows in the Fire Phase of his life, he will acquire all that it takes to become a fully mature horse with his own presence. He will be magnificent in

FIRE: Heart & Small Intestine

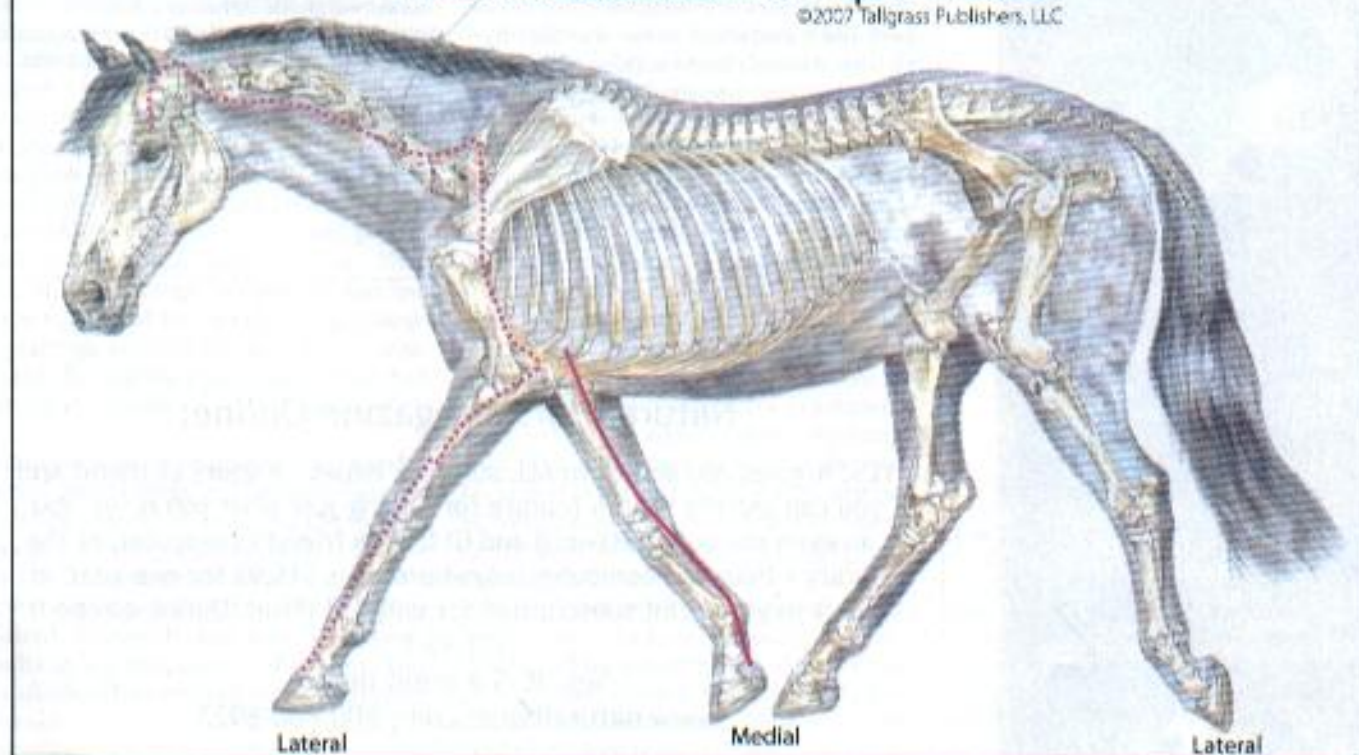
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Fire – Heart and Small Intestine Meridians: the meridians represented are "transpositional", i.e., the location of the meridians is based on the human meridian system and thus transposed to the anatomy of the horse. (Heart – solid line, Small Intestine – dash line)

FIRE: Pericardium & Triple Heater

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Fire – Pericardium and Triple Heater Meridians on the horse are transposed from the human meridian system to the equine anatomy. (Pericardium – solid line, Triple Heater – dash line)

movement, mind, and form. The Fire phase in the life-cycle of a horse is long and often underestimated. It can be six to nine years before the growth plates completely close, and the bones and muscles attain adult strength.

Fire Imbalance

When balanced and healthy, horses present a clear energetic depiction of Fire. The opposite is only too true...when the animal is not balanced; he can demonstrate all the difficulty and disease that may arise from an imbalance in the Fire Element.

When his spirit is not rooted by his Heart, a horse can be frenetic, restless and uncontrollable like a raging fire. Or, he can be lethargic and plodding. The look in his eye may appear flat and empty of spirit. His vascular system can be weak and his body cold, especially his lower limbs, because of poor circulation. He can spontaneously sweat with no exertion or suffer from anhidrosis and not sweat at all. His heart may race or suddenly slow for no apparent reason. He may not be socially accepted by his herd or not trust any other horse or human. He may stand in the shade on a cold day while all his pasture mates are standing in any ray of sun they can find. His digestion can falter which may result in colic.

Horses give us a glimpse into the energetic analogies that are intended to be represented by the Five Phases of Transition. They are so honest and transparent in the way they live their lives. Animals know nothing of theories or medicine; they are simply real creatures

living every instant. We have only to imagine a young horse dancing in the pasture playing his form of tag to have a perception of the energy called Fire. We and they are both between heaven and earth, giving us the opportunity to share in their joy. ☽



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About the authors:

Amy Snow and Nancy Zidonis 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; Equine and Canine Landmark Anatomy & Acupoint Energetics Manuals and DVDs, plus a new Introduction to Equine Acupressure training DVD. They are also the founders of Tallgrass Animal Acupressure Institute which offers hands-on and online training courses worldwide including a Practitioner Certification Program. 888-841-7211; www.animalacupressure.com; info@animalacupressure.com