

Got *Chi*?

by Amy and Nancy Zidonis

Chi, (also seen as *Qi* or *Ki*), is defined as “vital life-force energy” or “life-promoting energy” that circulates throughout the body. When *chi* is balanced and flowing harmoniously throughout the body, we all enjoy good health and mental acuity. If *chi* is impeded in any way, the body becomes compromised and can experience ill-health. This is the basic concept underlying Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM).

Acupressure / Acupuncture

Acupressure and Acupuncture are based on TCM. The only difference between acupressure and acupuncture is that acupuncturists use needles to stimulate “acupoints” while acupressure is a touch modality. Acupressure is non-invasive, completely safe, relatively gentle, yet extremely powerful.

How Acupressure Works

After thousands of years of clinical observation and documentation, Chinese doctors understood that there are channels or energetic pathways known also as “meridians,” that have specific locations in the body. These meridians are responsible for energizing the internal organs and circulating *chi*, blood, and other vital substances throughout the body.

There are 12 Major Meridians and two Extraordinary Vessels which run just beneath the skin. Each of the 12 bilateral meridians is named after the internal organ to which they are connected internally. We are able to influence the flow of *chi* and blood because they have “pools” of energy called “acupoints” along them. By palpating or stimulating these acupoints we can resolve blockages or stagnations that impede the flow of *chi* and blood.

Acupoints have particular energetic attributes that influence the movement of *chi* and blood. For example, the acupoint called Gall Bladder 34 (GB 34 - it is the 34th acupoint on the Gall Bladder meridian) when palpated influences the flow of *chi* and blood to the tendons and ligaments. We would use GB 34 to nourish those tissues to enhance their strength and flexibility.

You have chi.

Horses, dogs and cats have chi.

Every living being has chi.

TCM is best used to prevent illness and is effective in managing health issues. Casework demonstrates that acupressure can increase overall health and emotional stability. Specifically, acupressure can:

- Relieve muscle spasms;
- Build the immune system;
- Strengthen muscles, tendons, joints, and bones;
- Balance energy to optimize the body's natural ability to heal;
- Release natural cortisone to reduce swelling and inflammation;
- Release endorphins necessary to increase energy or relieve pain;
- Enhance mental clarity and calm required for focus in training and performance; and,
- Resolve injuries more readily by increasing the blood supply and removing toxins.

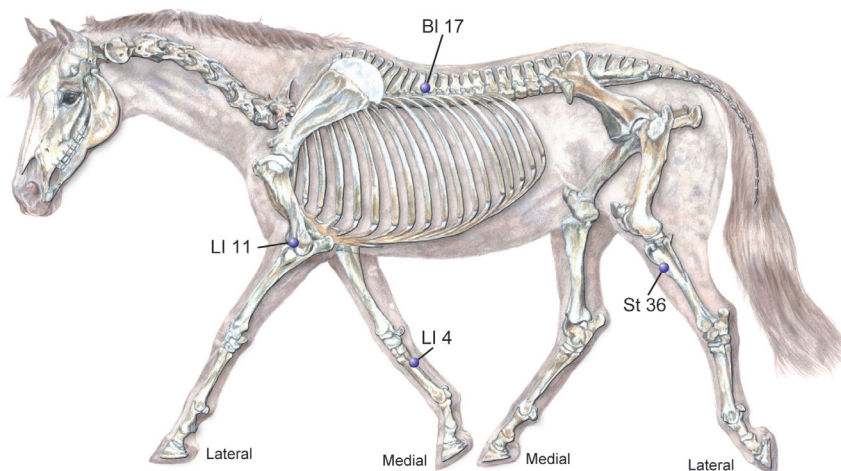
Immune System Strengthening

The immune system is key to good health in Chinese medicine. For instance, allergies are considered a breakdown of the immune system. When external pathogens invade the body, *chi* and other vital substances cannot function properly, resulting in possibly a skin rash or respiratory congestion, hence the immune system is compromised. There are specific acupoints known to address skin or respiratory allergic reactions. By palpating these acupoints on both sides of your horse or dog (cats are similar enough to dogs to use the dog chart), you can help boost the animal's immune system and help resolve allergic reactions.

Acupressure Session

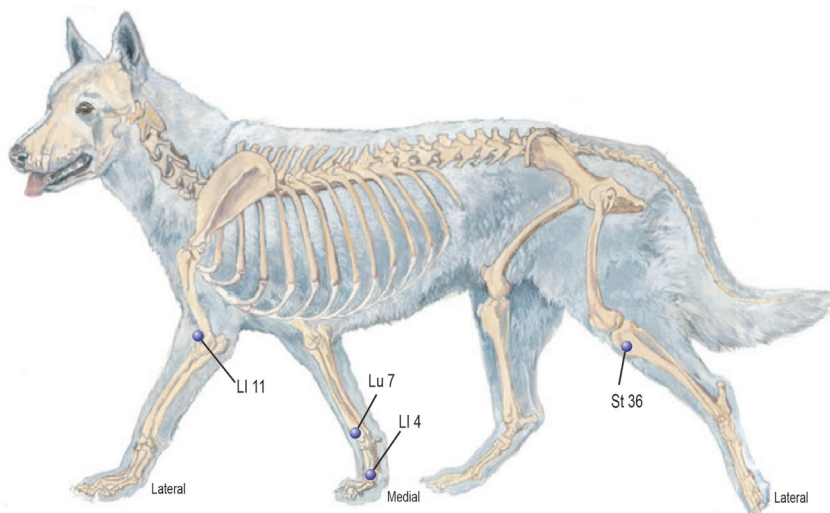
An acupressure session is a partnership between you and your animal. It's a time to clear your mind of any concerns and focus your healing intent for your horse, dog, or cat. Animals know when you are not present with them and usually let you know in their own way. Take three deep breaths to settle yourself. Very often the animal with whom you are sharing this experience will feel you relax and will settle, too.

Equine Immune System Strengthening



Point	Location
BI 17	Found approximately 3 inches off the edge of the spinous process of the 12th thoracic vertebra.
LI 11	Located in a depression in front of the elbow.
St 36	Located on the outside of the hind leg, below the patella.
LI 4	Located just below the head of the medial splint bone.

Canine Immune System Strengthening



Points	Location
LI 4	At the webbing of the dew claw.
St 36	Located just lateral to the tibial crest on the outside of the hindleg.
Lu 7	Located above the styloid process, 1.5 cun above the crease of the wrist.
LI 11	With the elbow bent, the point is found at the lateral end of the crease of the elbow.

continued overleaf

ACUPRESSURE

Hands-On Techniques

There are many main hands-on techniques used in animal acupressure. The two most often used when learning acupressure are both called *An Fa* in Chinese; both are direct pressure techniques. The first technique is Direct Thumb Pressure and the second is the Two-Finger Technique.

Direct Thumb Pressure: Place the soft tip of your thumb on the first acupoint shown in the Immune System Strengthening acupressure chart accompanying this article. Press the acupoints gently but with intent and count to 20 slowly, then move to the next point. The Thumb Technique works best to apply on the trunk and neck of the animal.

Two-Finger Technique: Place your middle finger on top of your index finger to create a little tent. Then lightly put the soft tip of your index finger on the acupoint and count to 20 slowly before moving on to the next acupoint indicated in the chart. This technique is good for point work on the lower extremities.

There's no animal in the whole world that can't benefit from an Immune System Strengthening acupressure session. Remember to stimulate the acupoints on both sides of your horse, dog, or cat so that he will enjoy the harmonious flow of *chi* and blood. By offering your animals a weekly acupressure session, you will be helping to support his health and well-being.



Photos: A selection of hand techniques –
Direct Thumb Technique
Two-Finger Technique