

# Chinese Herbal Medicine - Ancient Herbal Formulas Can They Help the Modern Horse?

By Gloria Garland L.Ac, Dipl. Ac. & CH.



**M**y interest in equine Chinese herbal therapy began in 1988, when I sought an alternative therapy to Bute for my own arthritic gelding. That first successful experience finding an alternative to an anti-inflammatory drug that can cause adverse side effects with long-term use set me on the long path of acquiring the skills and knowledge I would need to practice the art of Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM).

After returning to school and earning a Master's Degree in Traditional Oriental Medicine, I became a Licensed Acupuncturist and Chinese Herbalist and developed Whole Horse Herbs™. My goal is to bring complementary herbal medicine to the equine community and to share the ancient wisdom that has proven so beneficial to modern day people and animals.

In my practice I provide acupuncture consultations and herbal formulas for veterinarians, horse trainers and owners all over the country. I'm often presented with really interesting and unique health challenges. All my custom blended formulas are developed for the individual horse. This individualized approach is the hallmark of Traditional Oriental Medicine and is what sets TCM and Whole Horse Herbs™ apart from other treatments. I also incorporate the centuries-old classic TCM formulas, which are also used for more common problems. Such is the case with my own horse, Rocotillo.

Rocotillo, feisty and fun to ride, is an appaloosa gelding prone to developing a cough with a runny nose in the autumn. His condition can turn into a real hack with cloudy nasal discharge if not dealt with promptly. I use the classic Chinese herbal formula, Jade Windscreen Powder, to boost his immunity and keep him in shape for long trail rides. This classic formulation is ideal for horses under stress from shipping, frequent show schedules or those exposed to groups of horses. In Rocotillo's case, he starts mid-

summer with one tablespoon of powdered herbs twice per day and continues through the dusty autumn. Since beginning this routine, we have been cough and cold free.

One of the most important emphases of Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) is the prevention of disease. Jade Windscreen Powder (*Yu ping feng san*) is a simple Chinese herbal formulation used for centuries to prevent infections.



The Chinese have simple yet elegant methods of describing things. Jade is a gemstone highly prized in Asia for its beauty and versatility. The word "jade" is often used when describing an object or function considered valuable. Wind in ancient times was considered to be the carrier of illness; hence a wind-screen formula in TCM offers the body protection from the elements or external pathogens. Translation: Jade Windscreen is a very valuable formula for the prevention of disease.

In Traditional Chinese Medicine, disease prevention begins with a protective layer around the exterior of the body called *wei qi* or defensive energy. *Wei qi* is the body's initial protection against external pathogens. A pathogen can be bacterial, viral or a toxic substance. From a Western perspective, *wei qi* can be compared to immunity. When *wei qi* is strong, pathogenic factors are deflected away from the body; when it is weak, a variety of infections can occur.

I like to think of *wei qi* as the fence protecting your home and yard. When the fence is tall and in good repair, it provides a solid barrier against intruders and unwanted visitors. If the gate is left open and fence boards are missing, the barrier is weakened leaving the home vulnerable to all types of intruders.

There are many Chinese herbs that build *wei qi* and enhance the immune system. Three of these immunity-enhancing herbs make up Jade Windscreen.

They are *Huang qi* (Astragalus), *Fang feng* (Saposhnikovia) and *Bai zhu* (Atractylodes).

The pharmacological properties of the traditional herbs known to the inventor of this traditional formula and determined through personal observation have now been verified by modern researchers through clinical studies.

*Huang qi* (Astragalus), which looks something like a yellow tongue depressor, is traditionally used to strengthen wei qi. Modern research has identified several notable pharmacological effects confirming its historical use. Huang qi is an immunostimulant, increasing both specific and non-specific immunity. Huang qi increases the number of white blood cells and has antibiotic actions against streptococcus and staphylococcus. Clinical studies have shown it effective in the prevention of colds and respiratory infections. It is also considered an hepatoprotective (liver-protecting) herb.

*Fang feng's* (Saposhnikovia) TCM name is translated to mean *guard against wind*. Fang feng has antibiotic and antiviral properties. Clinical studies have shown it to exert antiviral action against influenza virus.

*Bai zhu* (Atractylodes) is traditionally used as a tonic to build both qi and wei qi. Recent studies have shown that Bai zhu increases the activity of macrophages and increases the number of white blood cells and lymphocytes.

Recent studies of formulas like Jade Windscreen combine the best of ancient wisdom and modern medical research to enhance both our understanding of TCM and the application of that knowledge to our horses' well being. Jade Windscreen is a safe formula for most horses and should be taken over a period of several months for maximum effectiveness. Herbs can be administered in powder or decocted in a tea mixed with grain or sweet feed.

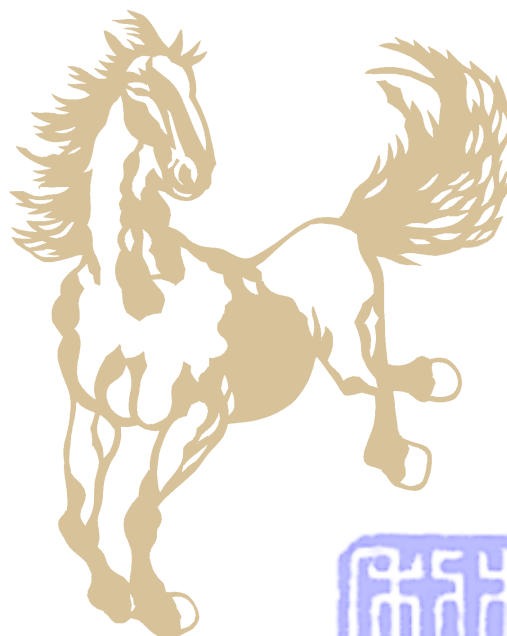
Can Traditional Chinese Herbal Medicine really benefit your horse? The answer is more than likely yes. Complimentary TCM treatments are available for most conditions. Chinese herbs have replaced Lysix for many racehorses with bleeding in the lungs and chronic laminitis is treated with a combination of herbs and acupuncture. Clearly, Traditional Chinese

Medicine offers a wealth of treatment possibilities for the modern horse.

Chinese herbal supplements should be used properly and thoughtfully under the guidance of a licensed Chinese herbalist. Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM), used properly, is an adjunctive therapy and, therefore, complementary to veterinary treatment. Information presented here is not intended to replace proper veterinary diagnosis or treatment and should not be used for that purpose.

#### References:

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