

# Rub Your Horse the *Right* Way with Tui na Massage



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

applied with fingers, elbows, and other tools, like tennis balls, to activate acupuncture points.

**Yi Chi Chan**, One finger meditation – steady direct pressure, usually the thumb tip. The hand is cupped in a loose fist supporting the thumb resting on the index finger. Direct pressure or rhythmic vibration is applied by rocking the wrist and hand back and forth. Apply to meridians, tendo-muscular meridians, acupoints or ori-

Chinese massage is called Tui na and literally means push and grasp in Chinese. Tui na is related to acupuncture and acupressure in its use of meridian pathways to restore the balance of yin and yang, stimulate qi and blood flow, remove blockages, reduce inflammation and pain. It is useful in treating injuries, joint and muscle problems and internal disorders. Tui na can be applied to both horses and riders.

Tui na is taught in hospitals, medical schools and is widely practiced in Chinese households. It is an essential part of China's primary healthcare. An interesting side note: many Chinese tui na practitioners are blind, relying on their fingers and senses to guide them. China's amazing gymnasts and athletes incorporate Tui na massage in their training routines.

Tui na is characterized by a number of hand positions and techniques all with colorful and descriptive names. While it takes time and study to become a master Tui na practitioner there are some easy to learn, basic tui na techniques which are very useful in the stable.

**An Mo**, press and rub – Is general massage for rejuvenation and health maintenance. One hand or two handed palm pressure is applied over most body regions. Circular An Mo is applied to the abdomen for colic and digestive problems.

**Dian Xue**, Point press – We call this acupressure in the west. Acupressure uses simple pressure techniques



An Mo

gins and insertions of muscles.

**Cuo**, Palm twisting - Both palms are placed on the opposite side of the limb or body part and rubbed back and forth rapidly. Good for necks, forelegs and horses at rest stops during trailering. Cuo relaxes muscles, restores qi and blood flow to joints and tendons.



Dian Xue

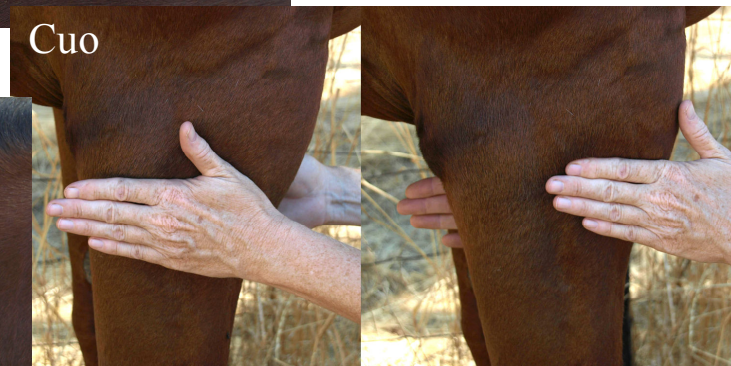
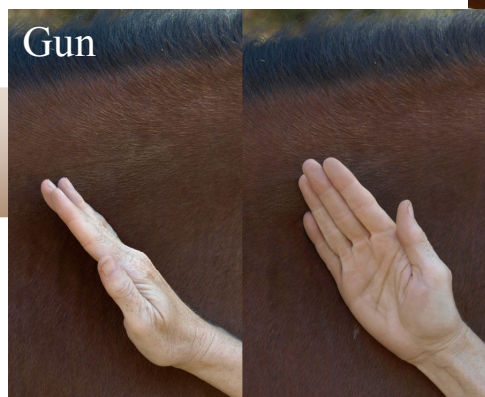
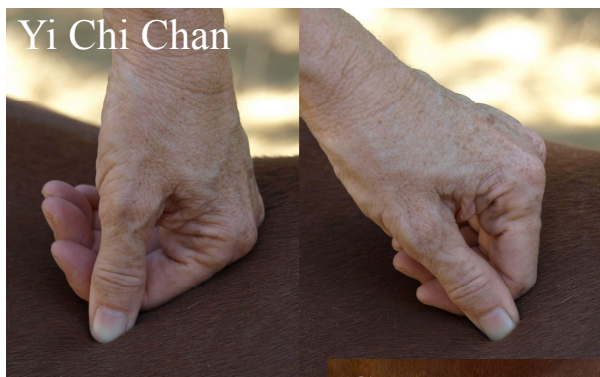
**Gun**, Rolling - Even and gentle pressure is applied with the ulnar side of the hand (pinky finger side) by rotat-

ing the wrist back and forth the hand is briskly rolled over the sur-





face of the body. This motion resembles a flopping fish. Gun can be applied to all parts of the body but is especially useful on thickly muscled areas. Gun relaxes muscles and tendons and activates the meridians. Great for endurance horses at P and R checkpoints. Keeps the muscles warmed up and prevents cramping.



### Tui Na and the Tendo-muscular Meridians

Tendo-muscular meridians are a unique type of meridian. While they share a name and general trajectory with the primary meridian, they differ in several distinct ways. The Tendo-muscular meridians run superficially and broadly on the body. They nourish skin, connective tissue, tendons, muscles, bones and joints of the body and maintain normal range of motion, which makes them of special interest to horse owners. They influence a wider region on the body but do not connect with the organs or the interior as a primary meridian does. They originate on the extremities and generally follow the lines of major muscles groups, tendons, ligaments etc. They are utilized primarily for movement and performance issues. They are ideal for stiffness, spasm, atrophy, arthritis and muscle issues. Tendo-muscular meridians are easy to access and are an ideal option for tui na massage.

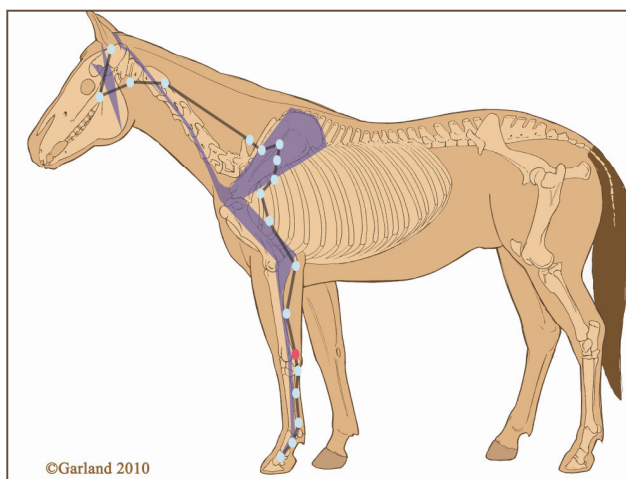
In the illustration the Small Intestine (SI) primary meridian is depicted in black and the tendo-muscular meridians in purple. As shown the Small Intestine's tendo-muscular

meridian covers a broader area than the primary meridian. Shoulder pain or forelimb pain ear and eye pain can be treated by applying tui na massage techniques like Yi Chi Chan, thumb pressure to points like SI6. (Shown in pink)

A few considerations for performing a tui na treatment. Short fingernails are a must and bulky rings should be

removed to prevent gouging or scratching the horse. Herbal liniments are a nice way to finish a treatment.

We can keep our equine athletes performing at their best by rubbing them the right way with Tui na massage.



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