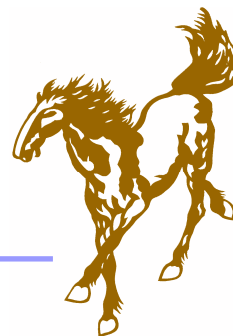


Acupuncture and Chinese Herbal Medicine - Can it Benefit Your Horse?

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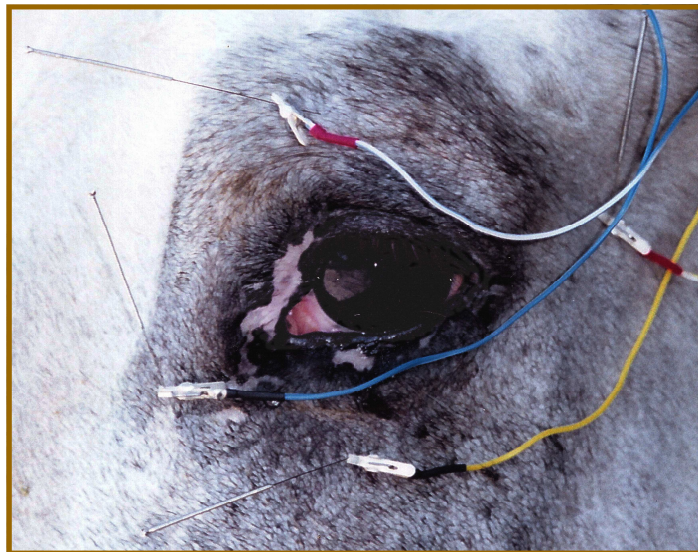
Equine and veterinary acupuncture has a long history in China. Old Chinese medical manuscripts and acupuncture charts depicting animals of all types date back to ancient times. A legend says that an elephant with severe digestive upset was the first animal patient to be treated with Traditional Chinese Medicine. Imagine the poor guy on corral mucking duty.

Chinese medicine is gaining such popular acceptance here in the West that several American veterinary schools have added acupuncture and complimentary medicine classes to the regular curriculum.

China like most cultures emerged as an agrarian society and as such the health of farm animals was critical to food production and ultimately to the survival of the village. Chinese Medicine evolved to meet the needs of humans and animals. Traditional Chinese Medicine (also known as TCM) offers assistance to a wide range of health problems, and as described in the case history below, it is not just limited to pain relief.

The system of Chinese medicine relies on three main methods or pillars. These are: acupuncture, treatment with needles; herbology, treatment with herbs (also called Oriental Medicine); and, Tui Na, a combination of acupressure and massage. One or several of these modalities are often combined into one treatment.

This system goes back some 3,500 years, and like any field of science, it continues to evolve and change with new discoveries. Currently in China and Japan surgery is performed on horses and cattle using only electro acupuncture anesthesia. No chemical anesthetic is used. Mild electric current is used to stimulate acupuncture needles preventing sensation and pain much like chemical anesthesia. The animals remain calm, alert and pain free during surgical procedures. It is a blending of modern technology and traditional Chinese medicine with obvious beneficial results. Animals are able to recover quickly; less medication is required and there is much less negative impact on the body.



Acupuncture and Equine Recurrent Uveitis

Cotton is an eighteen-year-old, Appaloosa gelding which experienced a sudden onset of Equine Recurrent Uveitis (ERU). This painful and debilitating condition is also known as Moon Blindness.

Cotton displayed all of the hallmark symptoms of ERU. His eyes were extremely swollen, watering and the pupils had a cloudy, blue haze. Exposure to sunlight was very painful and as a result he spent all day with his head in the dark corner of his stall. Cotton's owner called the local veterinarian who put him on the standard treatment of antibiotics, steroids, aspirin, and a topical cortisone ointment. He had been receiving this treatment for approximately one month without much improvement.

Cotton's owner was afraid to ride him because he now tripped and shyed. He was in obvious pain and unsafe to ride. Cotton's owner was willing to try anything to help his talented, all-around horse from becoming totally blind. He decided to give acupuncture a try.

Cotton's treatment plan involved two phases. In Chinese Medicine terms this is referred to as the root and

branch treatment method. This concept is a typical example of the more rounded and holistic Chinese approach aimed at resolving disease and promoting balance and health within the body.

The Chinese are very fond of using nature analogies to describe practical hands-on techniques. The analogy here being that like fruit trees in an orchard diseased branches grow from weakened root stock. When the roots are fed and a solid program of soil maintenance, irrigation and pruning is in place, trees grow strong, vibrant and the branches and bear fruit.

In Cotton's case the first goal was to get acute symptoms under control to prevent further damage to the eye, then secondly address the underlying root cause of the disease.

Cotton was first treated with electro acupuncture in the local region around his eye. This reduced the acute inflammation and swelling, i.e., treating the branch. The treatment consisted of four acupuncture needles inserted around the orbit of the eye. Small electrical leads were attached to the needles and connected to a small battery pack. The needles were stimulated with a low level current for about a half an hour. The result was excellent. The following morning Cotton's eyes were wide open and only slightly swollen. He was standing outside his stall in the bright sunlight. This is something he had been unwilling to do for the past month.

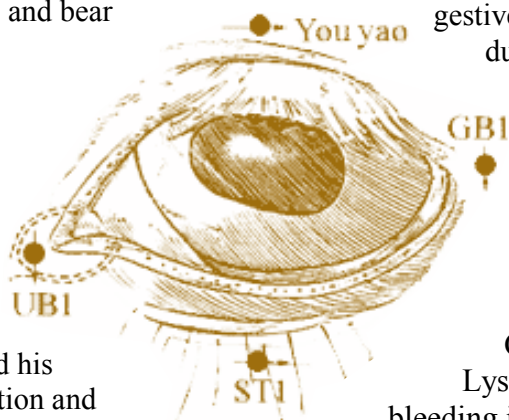
Phase two of the treatment focused on treating the root cause of the disease. ERU is considered by many experts to be an autoimmune disease. As with most autoimmune diseases the body is fighting the disease and itself simultaneously, in this case the interior eye. The second phase of treatment focused on building and regulating his immune system.

This was accomplished utilizing herbology, the second pillar of Chinese medicine. Cotton began a powdered Chinese herbal supplement consisting of twelve ingredients mixed into his sweet feed. He was started on a large dose for the first few months and then reduced to a much smaller maintenance dose that he continues to receive two days per week.

It has been eight years since Cotton's treatment and he remains symptom free. His eyes are bright with only the tiniest trace of white streaking on the iris. His vision is good and he appears to be pain free. He and his owner have returned to their normal work and enjoy trail rides again.

Traditional Chinese Medicine offers a wealth of treatment possibilities for both horse and rider.

Commonly treated conditions include but are not limited to: back pain, arthritis, trauma, laminitis, digestive problems, respiratory and reproductive disorders.



Can Chinese Medicine really benefit your horse? The answer is more than likely yes. Complimentary or alternative TCM treatments are available for most conditions.

Chinese herbs have replaced Lysix for many racehorses with bleeding in the lungs; chronic laminitis is treated with a combination of herbs and acupuncture. Electro acupuncture is a complement to conventional treatments for colic. Clearly, Traditional Chinese Medicine offers a wealth of treatment possibilities for the horse.

