

## *Suan zao ren* Offers Help for the Nervous, Jumpy Horse and Rider

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**W**e all have encountered the nervous, spooky horse on the trail, or perhaps you are the owner of such a horse, one who navigates with head held high, listing and worrying over every sound and what is around every turn. Easily startled and spooked - it can be a real anxiety-provoking challenge to ride a horse like this. Perhaps you are getting ready for a trail ride, show or competition and your anxious, jumpy mount's behavior is causing you to be nervous, worried and stressed, taking all the fun out of the day's activities.

The Chinese herb *Suan zao ren* (*Ziziphus jujuba* Mill) may offer help for both horse and rider in overcoming a case of jumpy, nervous tension. *Suan zao ren* is the primary herb in a number of classic Chinese herbal formulas designed to ease anxiety, fearfulness, nervousness and calm those who are easily startled.

*Suan zao ren* is a first-rate calmer for horses and riders who become anxious, fearful, nervous and unable to think clearly before rides or competitions. While it is not a sedative, *Suan zao ren* allows horses and riders to be calm without feeling or acting sedated or sluggish. From a traditional Chinese Medicine perspective, we say that *Suan zao ren* calms the *shen* and nourishes the heart. The *shen* is our capacity for clear mental functioning and thinking. It is our spirit and emotions. The *shen* is associated with the heart, the organ most negatively affected by fear, stress and anxiety. When the heart is bothered, the *shen* becomes unbalanced; calming the *shen* is synonymous with settling the mind.

Additionally useful to mountain bound horses compete at higher altitudes is *Suan zao ren*'s capacity to reduce altitude stress/sickness. It enables the body to acclimatize to higher altitudes more

or folks traveling to altitudes is *Suan zao ren*'s capacity to reduce altitude stress/sickness. It enables the body to acclimatize to higher altitudes more quickly without the usual side effect of headaches, dizziness, nausea and breathlessness which accompany higher altitude travel.

In Chinese *ren* translates as seed. *Suan zao ren* is a small seed that resembles a round, somewhat flattened, red lentil in size and shape. *Suan zao ren* is quite safe for long term use. For our equine friends, one to two tablespoons per day of ground herb in gain or well soaked beet pulp is usually adequate. It is easily ground in a coffee grinder and can be stored in a sealed container for several

months. For human use, one to two tablespoons can be brewed as a tea or taken in capsules. For high altitude travel start using three days prior to travel and continue for three days after arrival.

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.

