



Acupuncture: Striking a Balance Leads to Positive Results

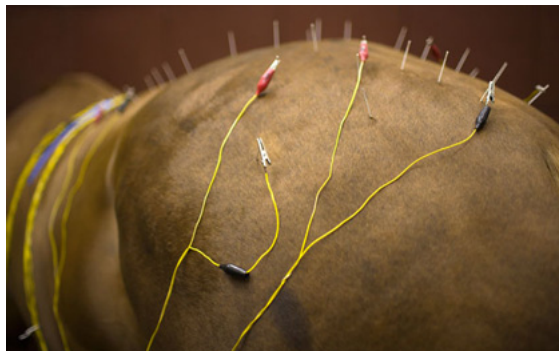
By Leanne Fowler, DVM, CVA

Equine acupuncture has been practiced for thousands of years, and its use and popularity has grown exponentially in the last decade within the United States. In an Eastern explanation, acupoints are sites where "Qi", the vital energy of the body, is gathered and distributed. In Western Medicine, acupuncture is stimulation of a specific point resulting in a therapeutic effect. These predetermined points have a high density of free nerve endings, arterioles, and lymphatic vessels.

The points are found on 14 major meridians or channels that govern the flow of Qi and blood through the body. Ancient Chinese medicine believes that the health of the body is dependent on the free flow of Qi and blood through the body at all times to maintain a balance of Yin and Yang. Alternatively, the disruption of the flow of Qi and blood through the meridians is called stagnation and results in pain. This stagnation can lead to an imbalance of Yin and Yang leaving the body susceptible to pathogens and disease. Acupuncture stimulation restores the flow of Qi and blood, giving the body the energy to heal itself and bring Yin and Yang back into balance.

The acupoints can be stimulated in a variety of ways. The most traditional method is by dry needling. Other approaches include, applying heat at the acupoint sites known as moxibustion, or aqua-acupuncture which involves injecting blood or other non-irritating substance such as Vitamin B at the site.

Another common method is the use of electro-acupuncture, where a small electric current is passed between pairs of acupuncture needles that are inserted into a specific acupoint. Some acupuncture practitioners may use a medical laser to stimulate the point or they may simply apply digital pressure without the use of needles.



In horses, acupuncture is beneficial in management of many conditions such as musculoskeletal injury/ lameness, back pain, and arthritis. Additionally it has successfully been used in cases of neurological dysfunction such as facial and radial nerve paralysis, and early cases of laryngeal hemiplegia; as well as in cases of horses experiencing reproductive challenges and gastrointestinal disorders such as colic and diarrhea. Acupuncture is useful in horses with behavioral problems and can improve chronic conditions such as PPID (Cushings), RAO (Heaves), and Anhidrosis (non-sweating). It is important to remember that acupuncture does not have to be a resource used only in horses with injury or illness but rather can be very valuable as a preventative therapy and to improve performance in healthy horses.

Integrative medicine, practiced by Dr. Fowler at Brandon Equine Medical Center, combines all forms of holistic care, wellness, and medical practice in a coordinated fashion to achieve the best health for your horse.

If you have questions on this or any other horse health topic email Brandon Equine Medical Center at info@brandonequine.com or call us at 813-643-7177.