

## The Earth Horse

by Sarah Fisher

The Earth Horse is likely to be solid, stable, of a heavier build than his/her Fire or Metal counterparts and as the name suggests, well grounded. Earth horses are generally 'good doers' and can often appear to survive on thin air. Blessed with a gentle, sunny disposition, Earth horses are generally good caretakers and enjoy looking after others. When in balance, they make ideal horses for children and novice riders/owners due to their reliable and easy-going nature. Earth horses are well suited to life as a family, or riding school horse, as they are able to form strong connections with several individuals at once. They enjoy home life, companionship and routine but are less reliant on the need to develop deep, lasting bonds than their more sensitive Fire friends.

Earth horses are generally content with whatever life offers them and are easy to look after and maintain. They are strong and dependable in mind, body and soul. They can happily live out all year round in a variety of climates and require little if any supplementary feeding. However, care should be taken to ensure that the vitamin/mineral intake is adequate as a diet consisting solely of grass and hay may not provide the correct balance needed to maintain vitality. With good feet that keep them well connected to the ground and plenty of bone, the Earth horse can look forward to a long and healthy life, provided they are allowed time to develop fully when young. Their broad frame and gentle nature can mislead their owners/carers in to believing that the horse is ready to be started too early which may lead to joint and tendon problems later in life.

Finding equipment to fit the Earth horse can be challenging for the owner as the broad frame and fleshy lips and cheeks can give rise to biting, rug and saddling issues. Their tolerant, forgiving nature can sometimes mean that dental problems and inappropriate tack fit may be overlooked as Earth horses are generally less reactive and tend to adopt a 'hey-ho' approach to life. This does not mean for one moment that the Earth horse is insensitive in any way. They are simply more concerned with the well fare of others, prefer to avoid confrontation and can generally find peace of mind in even the most challenging situations.

Earth horses have a great sense of self. Although they have great empathy with both horses and humans they are unlikely to over react to nervous, aggressive or inappropriate behaviour directed at them or around them. This may make them appear to be slow thinkers, lazy or even stupid to some trainers who can find their placid outlook on life frustrating but these mild mannered horses can be incredibly thoughtful. They simply do not have the need to push themselves in order to feel at one with the world. Steady, consistent training to match their steady, consistent nature is more beneficial to the Earth horse. If compromised, the Earth horse is more likely to simply shut down until matters are resolved rather than resorting to violent outbursts to convey their disquiet. If the situation has become truly intolerable, a balanced Earth horse would prefer to walk resolutely away. As the Earth horse enjoys contact they may learn quicker when education is combined with touch. Earth types often need to feel something to fully understand what is being asked of them. Voice commands alone often go right over their heads.

Earth types have an inherent sense of service and are always genuinely willing to be of help. Care must be taken not to take advantage of their easy-going nature and ensure that they do not get over worked. Earth people will often be employed within the care sectors i.e. social work, nursing, physiotherapy, counselling etc and horses with an affinity to this Phase can excel as therapeutic riding horses. What they may lack in the speed stakes, the Earth horse makes up for with stamina and a willingness to work. In keeping with their affinity to Earth, they make excellent plough horses.

Although their natural, nurturing instincts can make them ideal babysitters and companions for some young or nervous horses their placid, forgiving temperaments may inhibit the learning of some necessary social skills if the youngster is overly boisterous and the Earth horse is in sole charge. In a field of many, however, the presence of an Earth horse can be invaluable as they have an inherent ability to keep the peace and defuse conflict. They are the least noise sensitive of all the types and it is no co-incidence that the horses used by the cavalry to carry the drums are large, broad-backed, cob types.

The Earth Phase is linked with the process of digestion and is associated with the Stomach and Spleen/Pancreas meridians. Earth horses therefore have a tendency to be rather food orientated. Disharmony in the Earth Phase can result in digestive disturbances such as colic, bloating, gas and diarrhoea. Windsucking can be linked to disharmony in both the Earth and Metal (Lung and Colon) Phases.

In keeping with their predictable nature, the Earth horse thrives best with predictable management. They enjoy routine, and work best with consistent exercise and feeding regimes as they find it difficult to reach and maintain fitness. The Earth Phase is associated with muscle tone and Earth types generally have a softer feel to both their skin and muscle (relaxed muscle) than others. It can take many months for an Earth horse to reach optimum fitness and seemingly only a matter of days to lose it! Monitoring the food intake is vital for most Earth horses as they have a tendency to keep on eating even when stuffed to the brim. Several small rations throughout the day are more beneficial to the Earth horse to reduce the risk of gorging and bloating.

The Earth Phase is linked to the lips and mouth and Earth horses have a tendency to express themselves with this aperture. They often have a full, mobile top lip, which they use to make contact with horses and humans alike.

If disharmony occurs, the Earth horse can become possessive and clingy. Instead of simply enjoying contact, the Earth horse not only needs, but craves, attention. This can drive them to extreme outbursts of jealous behaviour directed not just at other horses but children and companion animals as well. The affinity with the mouth may result in biting. Empathy turns to sympathy and the horse may become overly possessive and protective of their companion(s). They can become fearful of losing their friend(s) and react aggressively if a person enters the enclosure to remove another horse. This fear of deprivation can also result in food aggression and the horse may threaten anything that comes near them when eating. They may pin back their ears and dive at the food source when presented with their bucket or hay or turned out to pasture.

Energetic qualities are also attributed to each Phase, and Earth is seen to be 'stabilising'. Unbalanced Earth can lead a horse to become unstable, emotionally, mentally and physically. They may find it difficult to pick up their feet and become fearful of losing contact with the ground. They may become overly grounded and become heavy-footed risking injury due to stumbling and concussion. A horse with excess Earth energy will have a tendency to get 'stuck' or 'rooted to the ground'. Disharmony in the Earth Phase can give also rise to a propensity to bruise easily both emotionally and physically. Earth types are often sweet toothed but high sugar mixed feeds and titbits can disturb the Stomach and Heart and increase the feelings of anxiety and nervousness associated with unbalanced Earth vitality. Natural sugars in oats, apples, barley and carrots are more appropriate foodstuffs should supplementary feeding be required.

NOTE: Molasses were originally added to the grain that was fed to horses to prevent mice and rats from eating the food. It has since become a staple part of mixed feeds here in the UK and is, I believe, partly responsible for behavioural and digestive problems in some horses.

As Heat is associated with Fire, Damp is the climate associated with Earth and horses with disturbance in the Earth Phase can become clogged and sluggish in both mind and body. Horses kept in damp climates can be susceptible to the invasion of Dampness, which is another Pernicious Influence that can affect the organs and meridians. If living out, they may need to be rugged during persistent wet weather to protect them from the detrimental effects of Damp. A horse that is affected by Damp may retain water, appear muddled in thought and suffer from dull headaches with a feeling of heaviness in the head. The urine may become cloudy, the droppings loose and the joints stiff or sore.

## Earth Element Associations

External Aperture	Lips and mouth
Bodily Fluid	Saliva
Season	Late summer
Climate	Damp
Planet	Saturn
Colour of Phase	Yellow
Physical attributes	Strong, broad backed with plenty of bone often with large feet
Examples of some associated breed types	Generally cold blooded types such as Draught horses, some Native breeds, some Cobs.
Examples of some associated colour types	Golden palominos, cremellos, dark bays/browns , some skewbalds, some piebalds, some greys.
Eye	Round, kind, soft and sweet with great depth.
Coat	Meltingly soft, often slightly longer coated than Fire types.
Balanced Earth	Calm, centred, stable. Nurturing, gentle, sweet natured. Tolerant, dependable, patient, secure. Good sense of self. Well grounded. Peacemaker. Willing to work. Good stamina for even, steady work such as riding school. Friendly. Enjoys contact with people and other animals. Well balanced on all levels. Easy going in all areas.
Excessive Earth	Excessive saliva. Excessive thirst. Puffy gums. Dull eye with heavy head. Heavy footed/legged. Lethargic movement. Lack of endurance. Water retention. Filled legs and bloated belly. Gas. Discomfort in belly. Weight gain - linked to metabolic disorders. Lack of concentration. Fibroid tumours. Obsessive worry. Temper tantrums. Tendency to overeat. Needy behaviour. Sensitivity to contact on rib cage, belly, stifle or hind leg.
Deficient Earth	Poor muscle tone. Loose droppings. Puffy legs. Swallowing difficulties. Bloated belly. Clingy behaviour. Nervousness. Anxious, spooky behaviour. Lack of focus - easily distracted. Separation anxiety. Food issues - comfort eating. Obsessive worrying. Windsucking. Sensitivity to contact on rib cage, belly, stifle or hindleg.

An imbalance in Earth energy can result in a wide range of symptoms that affect the horse mentally, physically and emotionally. The Spleen meridian runs up the hind leg and across the flank and rib cage, and the Stomach meridian runs up the side of the face, down the neck, along the belly and down the hind leg. Sensitivity to contact on these areas or kicking may be indicative of Earth disturbance.

The colour and breed associations are intended as a guide and not as a set rule. ANY horse can suffer from an imbalance within the Earth, or indeed any other Phase due to the close interaction of all Five Phases.

## The Fire Horse

by Sarah Fisher

The Fire Horse is likely to be athletic and graceful with a delicate, well defined body. He/she will be less prone to excessive weight gain than his/her Earth counterpart and may even have a tendency to lose weight through the colder, wetter months. When in balance, the Fire horse will exhibit a joyful, loving disposition. He/she will be bright in every aspect. Quick to learn and with a vibrant personality, this type of horse forms deep lasting bonds with both horses and humans alike. The Fire horse is a joy to own and will bring a smile to the face of everyone who encounters him/her.

Fire horses have self-confidence and pride. They are striking to look at and because of their vibrant personality have great presence. They may do well in the dressage, jumping or showing arena provided stress is kept to a minimum, as Fire horses generally perform well in front of a crowd. Sensitive to thought and intention the Fire horse is easily trained but can be influenced by any negative feelings of those around him/her.

It is the sensitive, loving nature of the Fire horse that endears them to so many but which equally makes them more prone to the effects of stress. They respond best to a gentle, confident training approach where their naturally exuberant, playful and sensitive personality is appreciated and understood. Rejection, or fear of rejection, of any kind may make them depressed or aggressive. Care should be taken to ensure that the Fire horse is given the opportunity to fully develop both mentally and emotionally, as there may be a tendency to rush aspects of the training due to their quick thinking, intelligent nature.

Whilst Fire horses generally maintain an air of quiet confidence, close relationships with both humans and horses are important to them. They feel the loss of companions and friends intensely. Fire horses that are kept alone and handled infrequently can become depressed and lose their zest for life. They thrive on being part of the social scene and generally bond well with all the other horses around them.

The Heart and Pericardium - If challenged aggressively or treated roughly the Heart and Pericardium meridians may be affected and the horse may respond in a variety of ways. He/she may give up - literally 'losing heart' - and shut down, or react in accordance with their royal status and order an execution!!!! (Note that it is the Queen of Hearts in Alice in Wonderland that shouts 'Off with his head' at any given opportunity!) Rest assured the Fire horse generally lets you know the MINUTE his/her teeth need floating, the saddle needs adjusting, the schedule needs changing or the grooming has become uncomfortable. If the discomfort is noted early, harmony can be restored before the Fire horse needs to express him/herself in a more volatile way.

If Fire is in balance he/she will be in his/her element through the summer months as the Fire horse relishes the warmth of the sun. If there is an excess of Fire however, this type of horse may be adversely affected by the heat. Evening exercise may therefore be more appropriate in high temperatures. Where deficiency occurs, the Fire horse may become depressed and performance may be affected through the colder winter months.

Extremely hot climates however, can have a detrimental effect on the Fire horse as they are more susceptible to the effects of excess Heat, which represents one of the Five Pernicious Influences that the Chinese believe directly affect vitality and health. Heat enters the body externally through the Wind Points on the neck and shoulders giving rise to eczema, heat rashes, headaches, a dry mouth and swollen glands. Horses that have been invaded by Heat may appear to have a 'summer cold'.

## Fire Element Associations

External aperture	Throat and tongue
Bodily Fluid	Sweat
Season	Summer
Climate	Hot
Planet	Mars
Colour of Phase	Red
Physical attributes	Graceful, well-defined head and body
Examples of some of the associated Breed types	Thoroughbreds, Arabs, show ponies, some Native breeds etc
Examples of some of the associated colour types	Chestnuts, red duns, red/strawberry roans, some appaloosas, palominos, bright bays
Eye	Large, generous and shiny
Coat	Soft, velvety, and warm
Balanced Fire	Joyful. Loving. Warm-hearted. Generous. Sensitive. Quick thinking. Easy to train. Alert. Forward going. Friendly. Exuberant. Enjoys contact through touch, both with humans and horses. Humorous. Playful. Intuitive. Self-confident.
Excessive Fire	Overly sensitive/emotional. Jumpy. Reactive. Hot headed. Hyperactive/restless. Hysterical. Tendency to sweat excessively. Lack of concentration. Irregular or rapid heart rate. Loud hysterical whinnying. Mood swings. Volatile/explosive outbursts. Spontaneous joyful bucking often accompanied by shaking of head and squealing (either with or without rider!!!). Overly playful. Preference for fresh, cold water as opposed to water that has been left standing for a while. Heat bumps. Dislike of contact around head area. Itchy face. Sensitivity to contact on shoulder. Bossy.
Deficient Fire	Lacking in joy. Melancholic/depressive attitude. Heart rate irregularities. Loss of hair around face. Nervousness with tendency towards nervous sweating. Extreme sensitivity. Lack of stamina. Lethargy. Cold extremities. Digestive disturbances with tendency towards colic. Unstable emotions. Tendency to hold breath. Frequent shallow sighing.

An imbalance in Fire energy can result in a wide range of symptoms that affect the horse mentally, physically and emotionally. These disturbances may be as a result of, or equally result in disharmony in one or more of the four organ systems associated with the Fire Phase - the Heart, the Pericardium, the Small Intestine and the Triple Warmer (Triple Burner). These meridians all run down through the fore legs and horses with an affinity with Fire or those with disharmony in the Fire Phase may therefore express themselves by pawing, stamping or striking the ground. In the extreme they may rear and lash out with their front limbs. With its association with both the throat and tongue, licking gulping and biting issues etc can be linked to disharmony in the Fire Phase.

## The Metal Horse

by Sarah Fisher

With slightly more bone than its Fire friend, the Metal Horse has an angular, strong body that is both compact and well defined. With a noble head, clean limbs, broad chest, strong shoulders and back Metal horses will often excel in a variety of disciplines. In Chinese Medicine the Metal Phase is represented by Mountains that arise from the ground and soar upwards to the heavens. The colour of this Phase is white and it is no wonder therefore that Metal horses are often associated with spirituality. The sight of a herd of wild grey (white) horses such as those from the Camargue, or the beautiful Lippizaners rarely leaves a soul untouched. The Metal Phase is also associated with breath and inspiration and even non-horse people, captivated by the vitality of these horses, can find them literally 'breath taking'. To picture a Metal horse, think of Pegasus. Strong, and noble, with wings that enable him to transcend earthly ties, this mythological horse represents the wisdom, spirituality, and freedom associated with the Metal Phase.

Metal people are often very artistic and Metal horses generally possess natural flair and talent. These traits, combined with the courage of the Metal Phase and a natural exuberance for life can make them ideal horses/ponies for experienced young riders who enjoy competitive riding. Although flexible in mind and body, Metal horses are often strong willed and determined. These traits combined with their intelligent, forward going, energetic nature may make them unsuitable for the more novice owner and a nervous rider or handler will quickly unsettle a Metal horse.

Sure-footed and athletic, these types make excellent show jumpers, endurance or mounted games horses/ponies. They may also excel at Dressage or Display Riding provided their natural flair is not inhibited by inappropriate training methods. Just as the balanced Metal horse rarely seems to tire, he/she hardly seems to age and can be just as fun a ride at eighteen as he/she was at eight. Care should be taken however to ensure that the Metal horse's body is capable of keeping up with his/her spirit as the Metal horse tends to brush physical problems aside with an 'I'm fine - lets go!' attitude. This tendency combined with a dislike of fuss and restriction can make them difficult patients if unwell. Unlike the Earth horse, the Metal horse will often prefer to be busy than to eat. They can also be incredibly sensitive to certain foods and may have a tendency to lose weight easily. Endless days at grass or in a stable will bore them and, like the Fire horse, they are not best suited to early retirement. If work has to be reduced, TEAM ground exercises, body work and work in hand can provide the stimulation the Metal horse requires to prevent him/her from sinking into the depression associated with Metal disharmony.

Metal horses are natural leaders. They prefer not to be molly coddled and although they enjoy comfort, can become impatient and annoyed with too much pampering. Whilst they enjoy the company of others and mix well with a variety of people and animals, Metal horses are not as reliant on close, intimate bonds for their emotional well being as some of the other types. They can in fact be very independent horses and often enjoy time to themselves alone grazing away from the rest of their companions. This trait means that the balanced Metal horse generally enjoys positive change and thrives on a busy schedule filled with variety and fun. If this is not provided for the Metal horse, he/she may well take responsibility for his/her own entertainment and go in search of a more interesting field or company! Routine is important to the Metal horse but rigid rules will inhibit the spirit of the Metal horse making him/her become irritable and withdrawn. When rigidity enters Metal's life passion is lost and Metal 'humiliates' Fire giving rise to melancholy and an inflexible mind and body. Metal becomes 'rusty' resulting in arthritis and other stiffening conditions and the natural flowing movement of the horse may become mechanical.

A balanced Metal horse will happily try his/her hoof at anything provided the request is fair - this sense of fairness is an extremely important issue for Metal types as they have an inherent sense of justice not just for themselves but for everything around them.

The meridians associated with the Metal Phase are the Lung and Large Intestine. Unbalanced Metal can give rise to respiratory conditions such as C.O.P.D. (Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease). White nasal discharges and impaired breathing are symptoms of disharmony in the Metal Phase.

Autumn is the season associated with the Metal Phase and the Fall is when Metal types are at their best. (Metal people often prefer to Autumn clean as opposed to Spring clean in preparation for the winter days ahead). Crisp early mornings and Autumn winds are exciting to the Metal horse adding to the natural exuberance they have for life. If Metal is unbalanced however, depression can ensue as the Summer days draw to a close and the restricted turnout and reduced exercise that occurs due to changes in the season can have a detrimental affect on the horse. They may become nervous, noise sensitive and overly spooked by the wind and may even panic when turned out at pasture as Metal disharmony can give rise to extreme fears and phobias.

Grief is one of the emotions that have an affinity with the Metal Phase. When in balance, Metal types will see and accept death or loss of any kind for what it is - the opportunity for a new beginning or experience as opposed to the end. If out of balance, however, they can hold onto past injustices and loss and become grumpy, stand offish and aloof. They may adopt a stiff upper lip attitude and appear reserved as they protect themselves from the possibility of further sadness.

#### Metal Element Associations

External aperture	Nose
Bodily Fluid	Mucus
Season	Autumn
Climate	Cold
Planet	Venus
Colour of Phase	White
Physical attributes	Noble head, strong, compact angular body
Examples of associated Breed types	Some Arabs, some Thoroughbreds, Lusitanos, Andalusians, Connemaras, some Native breeds, Camargue horses
Examples of some associated Colour types	Greys, silver palominos, albino, silver duns
Eye	Shiny, striking, bright and alert
Coat	Short and fine
Balanced Metal	Quick thinking. Friendly. Courageous. Alert. Enjoys change. Natural flair. Flexible in mind and body. Talented. Spiritual. Calm. Lively and forward going. Compact muscles. Smooth coat. Bright eye. Determined. Humorous.
Excessive Metal	Stiff, rigid muscles. Inflexible in mind and body. Mechanical movement. Arthritis. Hay allergies. Lack of perspiration. Inhibited circulation. Shortness of breath. Chronic cough. Intestinal disturbances. Extreme sensitivity to smell. Sensitive to seasonal changes. Reserved attitude to people/animals around them. Upset by fluctuations in routine. Intolerant. Tendency to hold onto grief and past injustices. Skin problems.
Deficient Metal	Confusion. In need of constant support and approval. Overly sensitive. Low self esteem. Fear of loss. Congested lungs, nose and throat. C.O.P.D. and other allergies. Asthma. Dry coat. Eczema. Disturbed Large Intestine function. Low immune system. Shut down emotionally. Anxious. Lack of inspiration. Extreme fears and phobias.

An imbalance in Metal energy can result in a wide range of emotional, mental and physical disturbances, which may be as a result of, or equally result in, disharmony in the two organ systems associated with the Metal Phase - the Lung and the Large Intestine. Both meridians run down through the fore limbs and horses with Metal imbalance may be sensitive to contact on the lower leg and hoof, and hold tension through the neck, shoulders and chest. As Metal expands into body air and is also associated with the skin, the condition of the horse's coat and skin can be affected by disharmony in the Metal Phase. It is common for asthma sufferers to also suffer from eczema.



## The Water Horse

by Sarah Fisher

Eye catching, strong boned and often a little denser set than their Fire and Metal friends, with a glorious black coat that radiates the reflection of surrounding light, the typical Water Horse has a very striking presence. With its association with the Kidney and Bladder meridians, this Phase represents a spiritual, cleansing, flowing and nurturing energy, which, in the positive, is linked to calmness. Although black is the colour associated with the Water Phase, Water Horses of course come in other colours although in my experience they do have a tendency to be more consistently darker coloured than some of the other types. (In TCM this Phase is linked with death and it is interesting that black is used in many cultures as an expression of mourning.)

Water Horses tend to be a little more introspective than their Metal friends. Balanced Water types are great thinkers and may appear to be secretive or guarded, since they enjoy being quiet whilst they muse on the greater meaning of life and the universe. Expressions such as 'a dark horse' or 'still waters run deep' may be used to describe that slight air of the unknown that often surrounds a Water personality.

Water Horses have a tendency to be slightly solitary by nature. Although they are generally good-tempered and enjoy companionship and contact, they also relish the opportunity to be alone at times. They may appear to have little quirks in their behaviour since, like a stream or river, they will tend to follow their own course to a certain extent. Provided the boundaries are flexible but firm, and the sensitive, questioning nature of this type is respected, the Water Horse can excel in many disciplines. They are often extremely talented and eye catching but may frustrate their owner/trainer due to the ever-changing quality of Water. Though generally calm and relatively easy to handle when balanced, the Water Horse can become tense under pressure. They may therefore sometimes be difficult to start and need patient, consistent and gentle handling if they are to reach their full potential. Channeling as opposed to containing is the key to success with the Water Horse. Like the ebb and flow of the tide, give and take is a must if a successful and rewarding relationship is to be developed. Movement is important for overall harmony of the organ network. If the Water Horse is overly restricted or confined they can become stagnant, frozen or turbulent emotionally and physically. Weavers often have an imbalance in Water energy due in part to the correlation between the Kidney and Heart meridian. An inability to be still further weakens the Water Phase adding to the stress and perpetuating the cycle further.

Whilst Calmness is the positive emotion attributed to the Water Phase, Fear is the negative and unbalanced Water can give rise to many irrational fears and phobias. Coupled with an affinity with the ears, disharmony in the Water Phase can result in extreme noise sensitivity. In particular, these types can be extremely reactive to noise or movement behind them. These phobias can result in panic bolting whether in hand or under saddle. As water will take the path of least resistance, so will the horse with an affinity with this Phase. It is not without reason that the black horse has the reputation that he/she does.

This tendency towards noise sensitivity and running blind would appear to have been utilised by the British cavalry. Black horses are used to pull the gun carriages to this day (although now it is obviously purely for display purposes). The heavy chains that are attached to the carts are not for decoration but trigger forward movement by rattling behind the horses to encourage them to gallop without question into the midst of the battle.

These attributes can make them highly unsuitable (and at times downright dangerous) for novice owners and it is a tragedy, in my opinion, that so many Welsh Section D Cobs in the U.K. are sold to beginners. They are simply not the same as other heavier types of horse who as Earth horses can make ideal horses for novice owners due to their tolerant and easy-going nature.

Although the eye is generally kind and round, it is often slightly smaller than that of the Fire, Earth or Metal Horse. It may be difficult to read at times, and is generally a little less striking than that of the Fire or Metal Horse. But if the Water Horse lacks a transfixing brightness of eye, he/she more than makes up for it in the sheen of his/her coat. As Kidney vitality governs hair, Water types are often blessed with full manes

and tails and a rich, glossy coat that draws you to them. Just as a sparkling stream or shimmering pond invites you to put in your hand, so the appearance of the balanced Water animal makes you instinctively want to run your hand over his/her coat.

Winter is the season associated with this Phase and is when the Water Horse is at his/her best. Long dark nights that allow plenty of time for introspective thoughts are often relished by the balanced Water type. Excessive time alone however can have a detrimental effect as too much introspection can give rise to fear and worry. Care should be taken to ensure that the horse is well protected against the elements as Cold is the Pernicious Influence that has an extremely detrimental effect on the Water meridians. Cold makes the body slow and seize up causing retardation of movement and pain. Although Cold can invade the body at any time of year, winter is obviously a more vulnerable time. Horses that are suffering from the effects of External or Internal Cold (deficient Kidney vitality) will have cold limbs. They may also have cold patches in the lumbar region and over the hindquarters. I love the endless links between Linda's work and TCM, and TTEAM acknowledges the correlation between cold patches on a horse's body and fearful and spooky behaviour as well as the noise sensitivity that often accompanies this pattern of disharmony.

Clear discharges are other indications of Water imbalance. When the body temperature drops through the effects of Internal or External cold a clear nasal discharge, and frequent, clear urination will occur. With its affinity with the Kidneys, the Water Phase is linked to salt. Horses that crunch mineral licks or who crave salt may have an imbalance in Water energy. This behaviour may also be accompanied by a dry or staring coat or dry hair on either side of the spine (along the Bladder meridian), which are more symptoms of Water disharmony.

#### Water Phase Associations

External aperture	Ears
Bodily fluid	Urine
Season	Winter
Climate	Cold
Planet	Mercury
Colour of Phase	Black
Physical attributes	Strong, dense body, striking, good bone
Examples of Associated Breed types	Welsh Section D, Friesian, Pyrenean, some Native breeds, some cross breeds including TBX generally mixed with a heavier type.
Examples of some associated Colour types	Blacks, browns, dark browns, dark bays, pintos.
Eye	Slightly small at times, very round, often with very defined eyelids both top and bottom
Coat	Luxuriously shiny, thick and often slightly cool to the touch
Balanced Water	Calm. Observant. Introspective. Luxurious coat. Full mane and tail. Good natured. Striking. Free flowing movement. Spontaneous. Cheerful. Fearless. Focused. Confident.
Excessive Water	Dry nose. Poor teeth and gums. Painful back. Weak back. Rheumatoid arthritis. Bladder problems. Stiff neck. Sore around poll area. Noise sensitivity. Phobias. Inability to concentrate. Lack of perspiration. Stiff joints particularly stifle area and pelvis. Withdrawn. Depressed. Poor appetite. Irritability.

Deficient Water	Lack of energy. Loss of appetite. Excessive thirst. Dry brittle mane and tail. Harsh coat. Weak stifle joints. Ear problems. Frequent, scanty urination. Stiff back with spine degeneration. Sagging abdomen. Pain in lumbar area and pelvis. Cold lower legs and hooves. Depression. Dislike of winter and being turned out in cold weather. Lack of confidence and trust. Premature aging.
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The meridians of the Water Phase have extreme importance in TCM. They are linked to the overall vitality of the horse and are said to determine how the aging process develops. The Bladder meridian, which runs along either side of the spine has many important acupressure points along its length. The Kidney and Bladder meridians begin and end on the hind leg respectively and weakness in the hind quarters and limbs can be indicative of Water imbalance.

## The Wood Horse

by Sarah Fisher

With a strong, lithe, muscular body and a keen sense of competition the balanced Wood Horse thrives on physical and mental challenge and as a result often excels in the field of Eventing, Jumping or Long Distance Riding.

Quick in mind and body, the Wood Horse possesses a keen sense of self and has a confident and energetic personality. These attributes make them fun and exciting horses for the experienced rider who enjoys competitive riding but the strong minded attributes that accompany this type can make them unsuitable for the novice owner as Wood types have a tendency to become over bearing and excessively assertive when out of balance. Independent by nature, the Wood Horse will quickly take charge if what is being asked of him/her is unclear and will often test out a new rider or handler to see where the boundaries lie.

The clear thinking, confident approach to life is applied to work and Wood Horses are generally bold and clever on the cross-country course or hunting field. They will often correct themselves should rider error occur when tackling an obstacle and get themselves (and their rider) out of a potential problem. Should disharmony occur however, judgement may become impaired and the thought process muddled, which may result in a dangerous situation as they take charge without clear planning and forge ahead out of control.

The Wood Horse dislikes confinement. Excessive mental and physical restriction can have an extremely detrimental effect on this type and give rise to volatile behaviour, as anger is the emotion associated with this Phase. Limited turnout, a strict schooling regime or excessive use of draw reins or other such 'training' equipment that forces the horse into an outline can literally enrage the Wood type and earn him/her the reputation of being inflexible and difficult to handle. Dressage alone may not be an appropriate discipline for this type of horse.

Wood Horses are clear at expressing their feelings and the subtlety of their language should be noted. The eye, with its affinity with this Phase is a good indicator of how the Wood Horse is feeling. When in balance, the eye is generally kind as kindness is also associated with this Phase, but can change to become hard and almond-shaped should disharmony occur. Horses with perpetual almond-shaped eyes are often extremely tense in the neck (and I believe suffer from a constant headache) and may become intolerant and even aggressive when under pressure. As Wood types are often prone to tension around the poll and TMJ, ridden and ground exercises using the Roller Bit can be of great benefit to the Wood horse. In particular he/she will greatly appreciate the freedom of movement afforded by the Lariat and this can often have a dramatic and almost instantaneous effect on the shape of the eye. Vision problems, light sensitivity and erratic spooking behaviour can also be symptomatic of unbalanced Wood.

Spring time is Wood time and is when the Wood Horse is in his/her element. Access to fresh, spring grass (green is the colour of this Phase) and the opportunity to stretch and lengthen muscles that may have been restricted through the confines of stabling or winter rugs will have a highly beneficial affect on the Wood Phase.

As a tree sways with the wind, balanced Wood types are generally happy to 'go with the flow' but care should be taken not to take advantage of the horse's nature and push the horse to its physical and mental limits. If the goals are too high, Wood can become dry and brittle and the horse will literally 'snap' under pressure or become prone to chronic health problems. Of all the Phases, Wood is the one to be affected most by stress because the Liver (the Yin organ of the Wood Phase) is responsible for eliminating stress from the mind, body and soul. Excessive stress can therefore over burden the Liver and deplete vital Wood energy.

The Wood Phase has correlation's with hoof growth and tendons. Cracked, brittle hooves or ridged hooves and/or recurring chronic tendon problems can be further indications of Wood disharmony.

## Wood Phase Associations

External Aperture	Eye
Bodily Fluid	Tears
Season	Spring
Climate	Windy
Planet	Jupiter
Color	Green
Physical attributes	Lithe, muscular, strong
Examples of associated breed types	Mustangs, some TBs, TBXs
Examples of associated colour types	Bays, browns, duns
Eye	Kind with a roundish/oval shape - tendency towards almond shaped when out of balance
Coat	Short, sometimes coarse to the feel
Balanced Wood	Kind. Focused. Alert. Quick thinking. Independent. Decisive. Confident. Bold. Assertive. Strong. Good stamina. Supple. Muscular.
Excessive Wood	Tension. Over bearing personality. Aggression. Tendency to lash out. Biting self - chest/sides etc. Volatile. Overly reactive to restriction or confinement. Inflexible in mind and body. Cracked hooves. Greasy feel to coat. Tension in neck. Headaches. Cysts. Tumours. Digestive disturbances. Excessive gas. Muscle spasms and twitches. Rigidity. Recklessness. Vision problems. Tendon problems. Painful flanks.
Deficient Wood	Chronic tension in neck and shoulders. Reluctance to go forward off the leg. Chronic liver problems. Restlessness. Depression. Box/fence walking. Depression. Anxious, nervous behaviour. Allergies. Muscle spasms. Eye and vision problems. Light sensitivity. Digestive problems. Lethargy. Tendon problems.

The Liver and Gallbladder meridians are associated with this Phase. Although horses do not have a Gallbladder as such they have a meridian that corresponds to the Gallbladder meridian in humans. This meridian runs from the corner of the eye, down the neck, along the body and down the hind leg. The Liver meridian runs up the hind limb and along the flank. Kicking and sensitivity to contact on the hind leg, and inflexibility through the neck and body can be indicative of disharmony in the Wood Phase.