



Why Temperament Type your Horse?

by Kim Bauer based on
Dr. Madalyn Ward's reference material



Horses come in various colors, sizes, and shapes....and 5-Element types!
Photo by Nancy McCurdy, www.nancymccurdyphotography.com

Horse caregivers often have unrealistic expectations for their horses and this causes frustration for all concerned. Relationships can always be a challenge, but when you want to relate to a 1200-pound horse, there is an incentive to get along. The more you can learn about yourself and the animals with which you interact, the better your relationships can be.

The Five-Element Theory in Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) refers to the five categories the Chinese observed in the natural world: Fire, Earth, Metal, Water and Wood. Applying the properties and relationships between these elements to the body was a unique approach to understanding health issues. The Five-Element Theory includes the idea that each of us, animal or human, is a certain "constitutional type" exhibiting certain physical and emotional traits that are specific to that element. Body type, physical characteristics, health challenges, and personality are all considered when determining a horse's underlying Five-Element type. Knowing your horse's constitutional type can help you make dietary and lifestyle choices for him that will best support his overall physical and nutritional needs throughout his life.

Background of Temperament Typing

Madalyn Ward, DVM, a holistic equine veterinarian in Fischer,

Texas has worked with thousands of horses during the course of her career and has studied acupuncture and TCM. Over the years, Dr. Ward noticed patterns in her horse clients and developed an innovative system called Horse Harmony Temperament Typing. With roots in TCM, this system was created to help individual horse caregivers understand tendencies in their horses and how best to handle them in training, feeding and everyday interactions.

The Five-Elements

Each element has an extensive set of relationships including but not limited to specific organs and energy pathways (meridians) in the body, emotion, climate/ injured by, season, color, sense organ, and body tissue. For example, an Earth horse would be negatively affected by a damp climate, could become worse in the late summer or during a change of season, could tend to have yellow discharges and/or experience problems around the lips, and may suffer from muscle weakness. Understanding these types of connections can help you recognize constitutional types. In the chart below, the characteristics for each element are listed to allow a better understanding of all the factors that may influence a horse being "typed" as a certain element type.

When using the chart to type a horse, take care not to focus on one

Five-Element Characteristics

Element	Fire	Earth	Metal	Water	Wood
Yin Organ/ Meridian	Heart/Pericardium	Spleen	Lung	Kidney	Liver
Yang Organ/ Meridian	Small Intestine/Triple Heater	Stomach	Large Intestine	Bladder	Gall Bladder
Color	Red	Yellow	White	Blue	Green
Sense Organ	Tongue	Lips (Mouth)	Nose	Ears	Eyes
Body Tissue	Blood Vessels	Muscles	Skin	Bone	Tendons & Ligaments
Emotion	Joy	Worry	Grief	Fear	Anger
Season	Summer	Late Summer	Fall	Winter	Spring
Climate/Injured by	Heat	Damp	Dryness	Cold	Wind
Personality	Flashy	Steady	Hard-Worker	Spooky	Competitor
Training Needs	Praise	Consistency	Respect	Trust	Firmness
Best Occupation	Showing	Lessons	Ranch Work	Dressage	Speed Events
Weakness	Circulation	Digestion	Respiratory	Urinary/Low Back	Connective Tissues



A sensitive Fire horse aiming to please her rider

single trait such as personality as the deciding factor. Horses tend to have a series of characteristics that form a pattern indicative of a particular element. The environment in which a horse is raised and lives in currently, plus other factors, can have a strong influence on his element type. For example, a Water horse may be calm and confident when living in a safe place where he trusts his handlers, but panicky and impulsive when handled poorly. Similarly, a normally friendly Fire horse may become anxious and fearful if treated roughly and without compassion.

Five-Element Types

Fire Horse: Perfect Show Horse

Fire horses love to be the center of attention and want to be adored. They make excellent hunters and dressage horses, and good pleasure horses. Fire horses need to be told that they are loved and enjoy being groomed and bathed because it makes them feel beautiful.

Earth Horse: Dependable Lesson Horse

Earth horses love two things: respect and food. They are solid citizens who want to be appreciated for their good work and food treats often go a long way toward keeping them happy. An Earth horse makes a perfect school horse and works well with children. They can develop behavioral problems when their daily routine is upset.



Water horse: Born for dressage!
Photo by Nancy McCurdy

Metal Horse: Hard-Working Ranch Horse

Metal horses enjoy order and control and can stand up to tough working conditions. They do their jobs perfectly and desire very little interaction. They can be found in all disciplines and are often found in working-horse situations like ranching.

Water Horse: Dressage Horse

Water horses need safety and a steady, trustworthy rider to help them through scary situations. They can be brilliant show horses though they can panic easily. They perform well in events that call



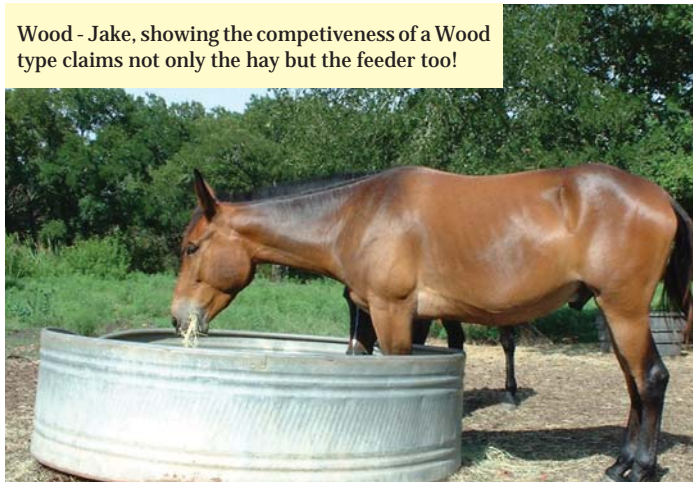
Earth horse: "Let's be a team."
Photo by Nancy McCurdy

for animation and excitement especially when there are cheering crowds.

Wood Horse: Ultimate Competitor

Wood horses love physical challenges and must be kept active or they will develop habits like kicking and biting. Wood horses make

Wood - Jake, showing the competitiveness of a Wood type claims not only the hay but the feeder too!



excellent jumpers, barrel racers, and cutters so long as they understand the rules of the game. Don't try to subdue or overpower a Wood horse; it is better to reason with him.

Note, this is just a brief description of each of the Five-Element types. Some horses are actually a combination of two elements. The intent is not to label a horse as a certain type to be able to put him in a box and make excuses for behavior or training issues. Temperament typing a horse gives the horse the freedom to be who he truly is rather than limiting his expression. Typing a horse allows a person to predict the factors that will allow him to be successful in a chosen discipline. It is especially valuable in tailoring a nutritional and exercise program to the true needs of the horse, based on his constitution and energetic way of being.

Acupressure and Temperament Typing

Combining acupressure with temperament typing can provide a thorough assessment of the whole horse. Issues found during the



Metal -
"What's my job?"
Photo by
Nancy McCurdy

assessment process can then be sorted using the chart above and patterns of disharmony may appear. In the Earth horse example given previously, acupressure points from both the Stomach and Spleen meridians can be selected to address muscle weakness, yellow discharges, and dampness issues the horse may be experiencing.

Another example is a Fire horse who becomes anxious due to poor handling and could benefit from point work on the Heart and Pericardium meridians to calm the mind and build trust.

The more you can learn about yourself and the animals with which you interact, the better your relationships can be, and knowing your horse's constitutional type can help you make dietary and lifestyle choices for him that will best support his overall physical and nutritional needs throughout his life. ♡♡

For more information:

Learn More About Five-Element Typing

Tallgrass Animal Acupressure Institute and Madalyn Ward, DVM have teamed up to offer an online class, Understanding Horse Types and Temperaments. This class is perfect for anyone wanting to learn more about the Five-Element Types discussed here, it includes in-depth information about each of the types, training suggestions, nutritional suggestions, case studies and a copy of the Temperament Typing test.

About the author:

Kim Bauer is the Lead Instructor and Dean of Students for Tallgrass Animal Acupressure Institute. She teaches courses worldwide and supports the Tallgrass participants by guiding them through the training program. In addition, Kim has studied extensively with Madalyn Ward, DVM to become certified in Horse Temperament Typing.

www.animalacupressure.com
www.horseharmony.com