Health Alert:

Self-medication with Ivermectin for the Treatment and Prevention of COVID-19

FROM: ROBERT KNODELL, DHSS ACTING DIRECTOR

SUBJECT: Self-medication with Ivermectin for the Treatment and Prevention of COVID-19

The Missouri DHSS has received reports that some people in Missouri were using Ivermectin to prevent a COVID-19 infection. Inappropriate use of this medication, especially consuming veterinary formulations, may cause significant harm. The DHSS is urging Missourians not to use Ivermectin for self-medication against COVID-19. All health care providers who encounter illnesses due to Ivermectin ingestion should report cases to the Missouri Poison Control Center at 1-800-222-1222.

Ivermectin is a Food and Drug Administration (FDA)-approved antiparasitic drug that is used to treat several neglected tropical diseases and scabies. Ivermectin is not approved by the FDA for the treatment of any viral infection, including COVID-19.

The National Institute for Health (NIH) has recently concluded that there is insufficient evidence to recommend either for or against the use of Ivermectin for the treatment of COVID-19. Several clinical trials that are evaluating the use of Ivermectin for the treatment of COVID-19 are currently underway or in development. The World Health Organization (WHO) also recommends that this drug only be used within clinical trials.

Nevertheless, the Missouri DHSS has received reports that some people were using Ivermectin to prevent a COVID-19 infection. Across the country, in Mississippi, two-thirds of recent calls placed to the state’s poison control center were related to “ingestion of livestock or animal formulations of Ivermectin purchased at livestock supply centers”.

The FDA has urged people to stop taking veterinary formulations of this drug to treat or prevent Covid-19 after receiving multiple reports of patients who have been hospitalized after “self-medicating with ivermectin intended for horses”. According the FDA, animal drugs are often highly concentrated because they are used for large animals like horses and cows, and such high doses can be highly toxic in humans. Patients who overdose with ivermectin can experience nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, low blood pressure, allergic reactions, dizziness, and problems with balance, seizures, coma and even death. Additionally, the effect of many inactive ingredients found in animal products is not known because those ingredients aren’t evaluated for use in people.
The Missouri Poison Center has concerns about the recent intentional misuse of the ivermectin as a preventative or treatment of COVID-19. The center has managed at least 22 cases in 2021 as compared to 2 cases in 2020 where an individual intentionally has ingested a prescription product or a veterinary formulation not intended for humans use.

Adverse effects that have been noted from an overdose of ivermectin include, nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea. Patients have also experienced hypotension, dizziness, decreased consciousness, confusion, agitation, and hallucinations. The Poison Center does not recommend taking ivermectin that is not prescribed to them by a healthcare provider.

Ivermectin products made for animals are not safe for human consumption. Missourians are urged to contact one of specially trained pharmacists or nurses at 1-800-222-1222 for advice if they have been using ivermectin or an ivermectin containing product and are experiencing symptoms.