IVERMECTIN: NOT PROVEN OR APPROVED FOR COVID-19

September 2021
Lisa Washburn, Associate Professor and Extension Specialist

Ivermectin is commonly used to deworm animals — dogs, sheep, cattle and other livestock. But some humans are using this animal drug for an unapproved and unproven purpose: to prevent or treat COVID-19.

**Dangerous Use of Ivermectin**

Animal formulations are highly concentrated and include inactive ingredients that haven’t been studied in humans. Doses meant for large animals can be toxic for humans. Despite the danger, people are getting ivermectin from feed stores or other sources, sometimes even ingesting ivermectin-containing products meant for external use only.

A version of the drug produced for humans, not the animal formulation, is sometimes prescribed to treat conditions like head lice, rosacea and parasitic worms. Ivermectin is generally safe when used as prescribed but can result in overdose when used by humans. Poison control centers across the county have cited a sharp increase in calls reporting ivermectin use, adverse effects and emergency hospital visits. Reports include increased use of veterinary products not meant for humans.

**Overdose Symptoms**

An ivermectin overdose can cause digestive issues, nausea, headache, blurred vision, dizziness, an allergic reaction such as itching or hives, low blood pressure, rapid heartbeat, hallucinations, loss of coordination and balance, seizures, coma and potentially death. Seek immediate medical attention or call the poison control center hotline (1-800-222-1222) for advice if you have taken ivermectin or a product that contains ivermectin and are having symptoms.

**Unproven for COVID-19**

Use of ivermectin for COVID-19 surfaced on social media following release of an Australian study showing ivermectin can inhibit replication of the virus causing COVID-19 in a petri dish, not inside a human. Ivermectin has not been studied in mice or humans for this purpose. Effects outside a living organism (i.e., a petri dish) cannot and must not be the sole scientific evidence for effective or safe use in humans. Research to evaluate use of ivermectin to treat COVID-19 in humans has not provided satisfactory evidence to recommend its use. The most effective way to prevent COVID-19 and protect against severe illness is getting a vaccine.
Ivermectin: Not Proven or Approved for COVID-19

Key Takeaways

- The *animal* formulation of ivermectin is not approved for human use and can be toxic. It includes inactive ingredients that have not been studied for safe human use.
- Ivermectin — human or animal formulation — is not authorized or approved by FDA for prevention or treatment of COVID-19. According to the National Institutes of Health, there are currently insufficient data to recommend ivermectin for treatment of COVID-19.
- Always consult with a healthcare provider for medical advice.

References:


Ivermectin: Not Proven or Approved for COVID-19

UTIA.TENNESSEE.EDU
D XXXX 09/21 22-XXXX Programs in agriculture and natural resources, 4-H youth development, family and consumer sciences, and resource development. University of Tennessee Institute of Agriculture, U.S. Department of Agriculture and county governments cooperating. UT Extension provides equal opportunities in programs and employment.