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***“Horses and the Premarin Connection”***

Premarin stands for pregnant mare’s urine (PREgnant MARe’s urINe) or PMU. Premarin is a hormone replacement drug produced by Wyeth-Ayerst. Its active ingredient is urine from a pregnant mare because it contains high levels of estrogen. Urine collection is administered on PMU farms in the United States and Canada under inhumane conditions. PMU mares and their foals are typically slaughtered. Healthier and more humane alternatives to Premarin are available.

**Premarin**

Premarin is the most widely prescribed pharmaceutical drug for hormone replacement therapy in the United States. It is produced in various forms, including pills, injections, patches, creams and vaginal rings. The medication is primarily used to increase estrogen levels for women who have had a hysterectomy or are in menopause. It’s also used to reduce the risk of heart disease and osteoporosis in women older than 50 years of age. In 2009, Pfizer and Wythe -- the drug companies that produce medications containing PMU merged, leading to an increase in the production of other medications in the same line of estrogen replacement therapies, which includes Prempro, Premphase, Premelle and Prempac.

**PMU Mares**

PMU mares are impregnated and, during the last six months of their 11-month pregnancies, fitted with urine collection devices (UCDs), which are held in place within their urethras using body straps that restrict their movements and typically cause chafing and lesions. The mares are confined to small stalls, which prohibit their ability to take a step in any direction, lie down properly, turn around or groom themselves. Estrogen-rich urine is produced by restricting water intake. Mares are taken “off line” to foal, impregnated again after approximately five to six months and returned to the Premarin production lines, which typically continues for 12 to 20 years.

**Foals and the Cycle of Cruelty**

When PMU mares don’t become pregnant within a short time or are no longer able to produce desired quantities of urine expected to meet production quotas, the majority are sold directly to killer buyers for the slaughterhouses. Foals born to PMU mares become replacements for their dams, sold at meat auctions for slaughter -- referred to as “The Foals of August,” sent directly to feedlots or sold to middlemen who work for the slaughterhouses. PMU foals rescued through equine adoption represent only a small percentage of those born on Premarin farms. According to the International Generic Horse Association, “A filly foal has a less than one in 10 chance of not going to slaughter, a colt foal, less than one in 50.” Japan considers the meat of foals a delicacy.

**Studies of Health Effects**

In October 2010, the “Archives of Internal Medicine” revealed that patients using Premarin are at an increased risk of developing kidney stones over a five-year time period by 21 percent. The government sponsored a Prempro research study by the Women’s Health Initiative in July 2002. However, when the investigation began exposing the fact that its use was increasing the risk of developing breast cancer, as well as causing stroke or heart attack, the study was abruptly stopped.

**Premarin Alternatives**

Alternatives to using Premarin or other hormone replacement therapy drugs containing PMU include healthy lifestyle changes, such as diet, stress reduction and regular exercise. Other alternatives include phytoestrogens that are natural substances found in flaxseed oil, soybeans, whole grains, alfalfa sprouts, fruits and vegetables. Introduced in 2007, Amberen is a non-hormonal supplement containing safe, all-natural ingredients and proven effective in reducing the symptoms of menopause.

**Responsible Action**

Speak with your doctor or pharmacist if you’re taking estrogen replacement drugs and unsure of whether or not they contain pregnant mare’s urine (PMU). If they do, request your medication be replaced with one that doesn’t contain PMU. Educate those you know about the reality of estrogen replacement therapies containing PMU and inform them of alternatives. According to the International Fund for Horses, “For every 150 women who stop taking Premarin and Prempro, one mare is spared from the “pee line” and seven or eight “byproduct” foals will not be slaughtered for their meat.” And finally, consider adopting a PMU foal.

Resources/References

Premarin.org: Homepage

<http://www.premarin.org>

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<http://www.chai-online.org/en/compassion/experiment_pharmaceuticals/experiment_premarin.htm>

International Fund for Horses: Premarin Mares and Foals Fact Sheet

<http://www.horsefund.org/pmu-fact-sheet.php>

International Fund for Horses: Premarin

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