

Government restricts sale of hormone drug oxytocin

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New Delhi, 16 February

The Centre has restricted the sale of popular hormone drug oxytocin to curb its misuse in dairy and agricultural products, mainly vegetables.

In a recent notification, the health ministry has asked raw material manufacturers of oxytocin to supply only to those licensed for therapeutic use. It also said the drug meant for veterinary use shall be sold only through veterinary hospitals.

"The manufacturers of bulk oxytocin drug shall supply the active pharmaceutical drug only to the manufacturers licensed under the Drugs and Cosmetics Rules, 1945, for manufacture of formulations of the said drug," the health ministry's notification said.

According to officials, oxytocin is widely misused by dairy owners and farmers in states such as Haryana to boost milk production and plump up the size of vegetables and fruits. It is believed that those consuming such dairy products and vegetables and fruits are hit by irreversible hormonal imbalance.

With the new notification in place, the sale

of the bulk drug will be restricted to only those manufacturers holding licences to make the drug formulations. The drug makers, on the other hand, can supply it directly only to veterinary hospitals.

Under Schedule H of the Drugs and Cosmetics Rule, 1954, oxytocin can be sold only on prescription of a doctor. Further, to avoid its bulk sale, oxytocin injections are packed only in single unit blister packs.

Can be sold only for therapeutic use; move to prevent misuse of the drug by dairy owners and farmers to boost milk and vegetable output

"It is a matter of grave concern because the drug is being misused widely by dairy owners as well as in vegetables and this is creating many health problems mainly in pregnant women and newly-born children," said an official in the drug regulator's office. He added that although the product was a prescription drug,

it was easily available and was being sold like an over-the-counter product. "We have already collected many samples but because of the lack of a proper law, these people were not punished properly," said the official.

The official added that state regulators are also directed to keep a tight check on the sale of oxytocin and inspect retail stores to monitor the product is not sold without authorisation.

Regulatory