

Life on the Farm

Vocabulary

Calf: a newborn dairy animal

Heifer: a young female dairy animal before she has a baby

Bull: a male dairy animal

Steer: a castrated male dairy animal

Cow: a dairy animal that has given birth

Lactating cow: a dairy animal that is in milk

Bulk tank: cooling tank where all of the milk from the farm is stored

Cud: previous swallowed food

Milking parlor: where the cows go to get milked

Udder: mammary organ that holds milk being produced by cow

Pasteurization: heating the milk to at least 161F for no less than 15 seconds to destroy microorganisms naturally found in milk that can cause disease or spoilage

Homogenization: is a process that prevents milk fat solids from separating from the fluid

Life of a dairy cow

When a calf is born, it will weigh between 50 and 100 lbs.

A heifer has her first calf when she is two years old. This is when she begins to produce milk. She will produce milk for approximately 10 months out of the year.

The two months that she is not milking is called her dry period. The dry period occurs at the end of her pregnancy, just before she has a calf.

Cows are milked at least twice a day and many dairymen milk their cows three times a day.

Most of what the cow eats is produced into milk and stored in her udder. The cow has one udder that is divided into four separate compartments.

A cow's average body temperature is 101.5F. Milk is immediately refrigerated below 40F to prevent spoilage.

Cows have 32 teeth, most of which are on the bottom since they do not have top teeth in the front of their mouth.

On average a cow eats about 40 pounds of grain and about 50 pounds of roughage every day. She will drink about 30 gallons of water everyday, which can double in the summer heat.

Cows are ruminant animals and have four compartments to their stomach.

The rumen, where food is first stored

The reticulum, where food that has been more thoroughly chewed as cud is stored

The omasum, where extra water is squeezed out

The abomasum, which acts as the cow's "true stomach"

Even though we buy our milk by the *gallon*, farmers receive payment for each 100 *pounds* of milk they produce.

The average cow produces 50 pounds of milk which is approximately 6 gallons. One gallon of milk weighs 8.6 pounds.

The milk is stored in bulk tank at or below 40F until tanker truck takes the milk to a milk processing plant. This is where the milk is pasteurized and homogenized and put into containers.

Some plants make milk into cheese, yogurt or other dairy foods.