

Dairy Facts

How much milk does a cow give each day?

Most dairy cows are milked two to three times per day. On average, a cow will produce six to seven gallons of milk each day.

What do cows eat?

A cow that is milking eats about 100 pounds each day of feed, which is a combination of hay, grain, silage and proteins (such as soybean meal), plus vitamins and minerals. Farmers employ professional animal nutritionists to develop scientifically formulated, balanced and nutritious diets for their cows. Cows also need fresh, clean water.

USDA statistics show that US dairy farmers are producing almost three times more milk with about half the number of cows compared to 1960, thereby reducing the total amount of feed, water and space needed, and resulting in less manure.

For more information, go to:

midwestdairy.com

dairyfarmingtoday.org

Is it true that cows have four stomachs?

A cow has four stomachs; the first three stomachs process feed in a way that people cannot. Because of this unique digestive system, cows have the ability to convert plants that humans cannot eat into nutritious foods like milk.

How many breeds of dairy cattle are there?

There are six main breeds of dairy cows: [Ayrshire](#), [Brown Swiss](#), [Guernsey](#), [Holstein](#), [Jersey](#) and [Milking Shorthorn](#). A seventh, [Red and White](#), is a variation of the Holstein breed.

What do you call male and female dairy animals?

Males are called bulls. Females, prior to giving birth, are called calves or heifers. After they give birth, female dairy animals are called cows.

How does a cow produce milk?

All cows produce milk once they deliver a calf. About 10 months after calving, the amount of milk the cow gives naturally decreases substantially and the cow undergoes “drying off.” About 12 to 14 months after the birth of her previous calf, a cow will calve again, thus providing milk.

How long do cows live?

The life of a dairy cow varies from farm to farm and from cow to cow; some can live for as long as 20 years while others may have a much shorter life. Dairy farmers work hard to keep cows healthy for a long productive life. However, removing cows from the dairy herd is a common practice that allows farmers to bring in new, more productive cows, thus ensuring a steady supply of milk. Meat from cows that are no longer milking is a valuable source of safe and nutritious food.