

Life Cycle



Heifer

Heifers are bred at 15 months of age, and have a nine-month pregnancy; that means most heifers give birth to their first calf at about two years old.



Calving

A heifer has to give birth to a calf before she can produce milk, and then she is referred to as a cow. Typically cows give birth to a single calf at a time.

Calf

Female calves are raised to become replacement cows for the herd, while male calves are typically raised for veal.



Milk Production

A cow will produce milk for about 10 months, but will stop producing milk during a two-month "dry" period to prepare for the birth of her next calf.



Fact

✓ It only takes 2-3 days for milk to get from a farm to your grocery store.

Did you know...

...milk is sampled from every farm before it's put in the milk truck? This is done to ensure each tank of milk meets strict government quality standards, such as being free of antibiotic residues. In addition, every truckload is tested at the processing plant. If there's a problem with the milk, the entire load is rejected and the farmer responsible can be fined.





The Real DIRT on Dairy Farming

Fact

✓ 97% of Canada's farms are still family owned and run.



Fact

✓ Farmers regularly work with veterinarians and nutritionists to provide the best care possible for their cows.



Fact

✓ Dairy cows provide an average of 30 litres of milk per day.



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Where do they live?



There are three main types of dairy farms:

- 1) A traditional tie-stall barn gives each cow its own space with bedding, and constant access to food and water. The cows are milked in their stalls.
- 2) A free-stall barn has large areas where cows move around freely, and go to a central milking parlour area two to three times a day.
- 3) A robotic barn is similar to a free-stall barn, but instead of using a central milking parlour, the cows visit a milking station whenever they choose.



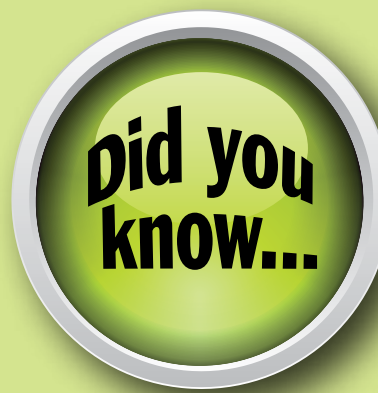
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A calf hutch is a structure that some farmers use to house calves. Hutchers allow calves to be fed individually, and reduce contact with other animals and “bugs” that could be in the barn. This is important as calves need to build up their immune systems.

Terminology

Bull : A mature, male bovine.

Calf : A newborn bovine.

Cow : A mature, female bovine.

Dry Cow : A cow that is waiting to give birth and is not producing milk.

Heifer : A young female bovine that has not yet had a calf.

Udder : The mammary organ that produces the animal’s milk. A cow’s udder has four chambers and four teats.

What do they eat?



A cow’s diet consists of grasses for fibre, corn for energy, soybeans for protein and added vitamins and minerals. Cows have access to fresh feed and water 24 hours a day, and will eat many times throughout the day and night.

