

Full Circle



Milk is a nutritional powerhouse, and over the past decades, agricultural practices have enabled dairy farmers to produce more milk with fewer resources. In fact, more milk is produced today with only 9 million cows than with 26 million cows in 1944. How? Dairy farmers take great care to provide the best environment, food, and medical care for their cows, because comfortable cows are productive cows!



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Part 1: Myth vs. Reality

How much do you already know about the care of dairy cows and the value of their milk? Take this quiz to test your knowledge. In the left column, circle the correct answer. In the right column, check off whether the statement is true or false.

- About _____ of U.S. dairy farms are family owned and operated.
A. 95% C. 70%
B. 45% D. 15%
- Cow manure can be recycled into _____ and even pots for planting.
A. energy C. bedding for cows
B. fertilizer D. all of the above
- Many dairy farmers also recycle _____ up to 3 times — first, for cooling milk, then for cleaning stalls, and finally as a nutrient-rich fertilizer for the fields.
A. packaging C. water
B. corn husks D. storage tanks
- Each day, a cow drinks about 35 gallons of water — enough to fill a bathtub — and produces approximately _____ of milk.
A. 8 gallons C. 35 gallons
B. 25 ounces D. 1 gallon
- Milk is tested for _____ on the farm and at the processing plant to be sure it is safe for consumers to drink.
A. hormones C. antibiotics
B. viruses D. excess fat
- Cows spend about 8 hours chewing their cud every day.
 True False
- Cows can get nutrition from byproducts of other farms, like citrus pulp from juice farms and cottonseed from cotton farms.
 True False
- Cows' diets are carefully designed by farmers and nutritionists to provide the best nutrition possible for optimal health.
 True False
- Robotic milking systems enable cows to be milked on their own schedules — two to three times per day — and help farmers spend time caring for cows in other ways.
 True False
- In free-stall barns, cows can move about to eat, drink, and rest whenever they like; these enclosures let in fresh air and sunshine, while providing shade and protection from the wind, cold, or rain.
 True False

Part 2: Farm to Family

Have you ever wondered how the dairy products you enjoy get from the farm to your refrigerator? It takes careful coordination by a bustling, localized industry and frequent testing along the way that ensures that milk is one of the safest foods you can purchase. And it is never touched by human hands until you open the container.

To test how much you know, use the word bank to fill in the blanks.

robotic degrees
grocery homogenized insulated
nutritious pasteurized
packaged standardized

- On a dairy farm, cows receive plenty of _____ food, fresh water, comfortable housing, and regular veterinary care.
- Using a _____ milking machine, cows choose when they want to be milked, generally two to three times a day.
- Milk is cooled to 35 _____ and then transported in a milk truck, which is a refrigerator on wheels.
- _____ tanker trucks haul this fresh milk to a processing facility.
- Then, it is _____ to various fat levels (fat-free, 1%, 2%, or “whole” milk).
- Next, the milk is _____, or heated to kill potentially harmful bacteria, and _____ so it doesn't separate and rise to the top.
- Finally, the milk is _____ or processed into cheese, yogurt, etc.
- Refrigerated trucks transport milk and dairy foods to _____ stores or local schools for you and your family to enjoy!

