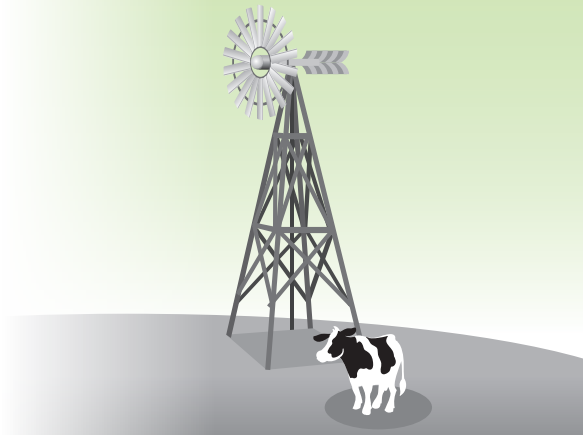


# Homesteading and Dairy Farming in the 1800s



Most dairy production in the 1800s took place on small family farms. James Ruby farmed near Calgary in the late 1800s. In a pamphlet about farming in Alberta, he wrote about the advantages of dairy farming.

## An account by James Ruby, Calgary, November 17th 1888

You ask would I advise new settlers in Alberta to begin dairy farming at once?

Most decidedly I do, as it is the surest road to success and wealth. No matter how small his beginning, let him get a few cows, as many as possible, as many as he can milk and properly care for.

**For instance** [for example], a settler arrives here [with enough resources] to [build] a small house on this 160-acre homestead... with horses, a **plough** [a tool used to prepare soil for planting crops] and **harrow** [a tool for breaking up and smoothing out soil], and with enough of seed to plant a few acres.

Then, if he has a wife, and \$100 left, let him buy two cows; if more money... more cows – say five cows the first year.

From these he will be able to make **five pounds** [2.25 kilograms] of butter daily during five months, worth in our market 25 cents a **pound** [slightly less than half a kilogram]. This will support himself and wife. The milk will also feed three calves and a couple of pigs.

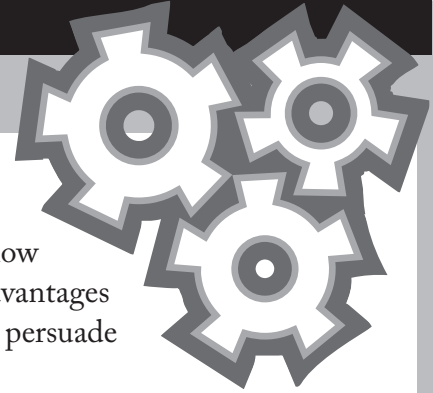
Now, it must be remembered that the care of these should not prevent him from **cultivating** [growing] a good garden and attending to a **goodly** [large] number of **acres** [hectares] of crops besides. And it must be also remembered... that no matter how **favourable** [pleasant] the season may be, the garden and the cultivated acres may be a failure, but neither hail-storm nor frost affect the **returns** [payments] from properly attended milk cows.

[It is likely that these activities will result in] **cooperative dairy farming** [when farmers work together and combine their resources], when the **creamery** [a place where dairy products like butter and cheese are made] will be established in the town.

In this creamery, a... butter-maker... will produce from the best cream of Alberta the best creamery butter... in the world.

*Dairy Farming, Ranching and Mining in Alberta and Assiniboia.*  
Accessed from *Internet Archive*: p. 39. [www.archive.org/details/cihm\\_30354](http://www.archive.org/details/cihm_30354)

## Using Primary Sources



Primary sources can provide “snapshots” of ways of life and attitudes that people living during a specific time period had. When using a primary source for research, it is important to know why it was created. James Ruby was asked to write about the advantages of dairy farming in this pamphlet. The pamphlet was created to persuade people to come west to start farms.

What are some words or phrases in the story that you are unfamiliar with? Record them below. Work with a partner to figure out what these words or phrases mean. Use the definitions provided in the excerpt to help you.

James Ruby wrote this article to **persuade**, or try to influence, other farmers to come to Alberta. What examples of persuasive words or sentences can you find in James Ruby’s story?

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What were some of the responsibilities of a dairy farmer in the late 1800s, according to James Ruby’s story? Make a list of three to four of these responsibilities below.

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How do you think these responsibilities are similar or different from the responsibilities dairy farmers have today? Use the **T-Chart** below or make one of your own to compare three examples.

Responsibilities of Dairy Farmers in the 1800s	Responsibilities of Dairy Farmers Today



Play the *Then and Now Interactive* on the *Moo2You* website at [www.moo2you.ca/roots.html](http://www.moo2you.ca/roots.html).

What did you find out about the ways that dairy farmers' responsibilities changed over time? Add an example from the website activity to your **T-Chart**.