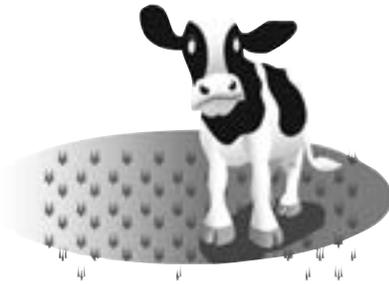


Taking Care of Cows



Taking good care of cows is how dairy farmers take good care of their business. A healthy, happy cow produces more milk. To keep their cows happy, dairy farmers pay attention to the same things that people need for good health:

- A clean and safe place to live
- The right amount of healthy food
- A doctor who helps prevent or treat illnesses. An animal doctor is called a **veterinarian**.

Most dairy farmers produce at least some of the feed on their farms. But it takes more than hay and barley to keep a cow healthy and producing milk. Responsible animal care is the number one priority of the dairy farmer. It is in the farmer's best interest to ensure that the cows are comfortable. Cows that are comfortable and well cared for grow better, are healthier, and produce more milk. The proper care of dairy cows includes feeding, watering, providing shelter, and monitoring their health and safety.

Dairy cows are fed a diet that has lots of fibre. This diet can include:

- High quality hay (4 kg per day)
- **Silage**, which is a mixture of grasses and grains that are packed and covered in an airtight storage tank or a pit called a **sil**o (16 kg per day)
- Mixed grains (10 kg per day)
- Salt
- Vitamins and minerals.

This diet amounts to 75 000 calories per day. Compare this to the diet of a human adult, which is about 2 000 calories a day.

It is also important that fresh clean water is available all the time as dairy cows drink about 60 to 150 litres of water per day. Compare this to a bathtub, which holds about 100 litres of water.

Healthy animals are needed to produce good quality milk. In Canada, the government also has a role to play in the dairy production cycle. Canada has laws that protect farm animals. These laws and **regulations**, or rules, help make sure that animals are treated **humanely**, with understanding, respect, and caring. Everyone who handles **livestock**, animals used for food, as well as the food products that we get from livestock, must follow these regulations.

Most provinces are members of Farm Animal Care Associations, which are made of people from different industries who work together for the responsible care of animals.

Have you ever had to take antibiotics?

Antibiotics, medicine used to control infections, are used very carefully with cows. Sometimes dairy cows get sick and antibiotics may be needed to help them get better. Health Canada has strict guidelines in place that dairy farmers must follow. Cows that need antibiotics are identified and their milk is discarded to make sure that any leftover antibiotics do not get into the milk supply.

As an extra safety measure, once treatment is finished, the cow's milk is tested to ensure it is free of any traces of antibiotics before including it in the milk supply. In addition, milk processors test all milk for traces of antibiotics before accepting it. Milk is rejected if it tests positive for any trace of antibiotics.

Researcher's Corner

Using A Web Resource

Alberta Farm Animal Care provides information about the laws that protect farm animals. Go to **Weblinks** on www.moo2you.ca to select the weblink below and learn why these laws exist.

www.afac.ab.ca/Public/Teachers/booklet.pdf

Who is involved in animal care?

Why do you think animal care is part of the dairy production cycle?



Play the *On the Job Interactive App* in the **On the Job** inquiry page or the **Game Corner** on the *Moo2You* website at www.moo2you.ca.

Which occupations and jobs are directly involved in providing care to dairy cows and calves?

What responsibilities do these occupations and jobs have in common?



Photograph courtesy of Morsan Farms.

The Million Dollar Cow

Eastside Lewisdale Gold Missy lives in Ponoka, Alberta. She is only one of five cows in the world, and the second in Canada, to sell for more than \$1 million.

Missy is now one of the most famous cows in the world too! She is a Holstein cow and was born in Prince Edward Island. Missy has a very high rating and has won a number of awards for milk production. Her calves are also very valuable. Even though her new owners live in the United States and Denmark, Missy will continue to live in Ponoka.

Try a web search, using the search term "missy million dollar cow." Why do you think Missy is so famous?
