

Farming Across Canada

Every dairy farm is part of a natural landscape. Every dairy farm depends on, and uses, natural resources like the land, sunlight, water, and soil. Every region and ecozone has these basic natural resources.

However, the quality and availability of resources like water and soil can be different in each region. The land may be flat and gently rolling, or it can be rugged and mountainous. And these differences affect where dairy farms are located.

Farming in the Cordillera

Most of the land in this region is not suitable for agriculture. However, the areas that are used for farming are highly productive. Most farming, including dairy farms, is found in the lower Fraser River Valley and the Okanagan. Dairy production is very important in the lower Fraser River Valley.

Farming in the Interior Plains

Agriculture is an important human activity across the Interior Plains region. Farmers grow a variety of crops, including wheat, canola, barley, alfalfa, and oats. Dairy farms are found across Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba.

Farming in the Arctic or North

Canada's northern region covers the Arctic islands and waters, and the taiga from the Mackenzie Delta to Labrador. **Taiga** (TY guh) is a geographic term that is used to describe areas with a cold climate, covered by dense coniferous forests, or woodlands. Most of the human activity in this region consists of mining, forestry, and oil and gas production. Hunting and fishing are also important human activities. There is almost no crop or animal farming in this region.

Farming in the Atlantic or Appalachian

Most agricultural activity in this region takes place in Prince Edward Island, along New Brunswick's Saint John River valley, and around the Bay of Fundy and Northumberland Strait in Nova Scotia. The land in other areas throughout the Atlantic region is too rough, rocky, or uneven for agriculture and farming communities to develop and grow. Dairy farms are found mainly in Prince Edward Island and along the Northumberland Strait.

Farming in the Canadian Shield

The Canadian Shield extends from northern Saskatchewan to Newfoundland and Labrador, and is most commonly known for human activities such as forestry and mining. This region has long, cold winters and short, warm summers. Most animal farms raise beef cattle. However, dairy farms can be found in the southern areas of this region.

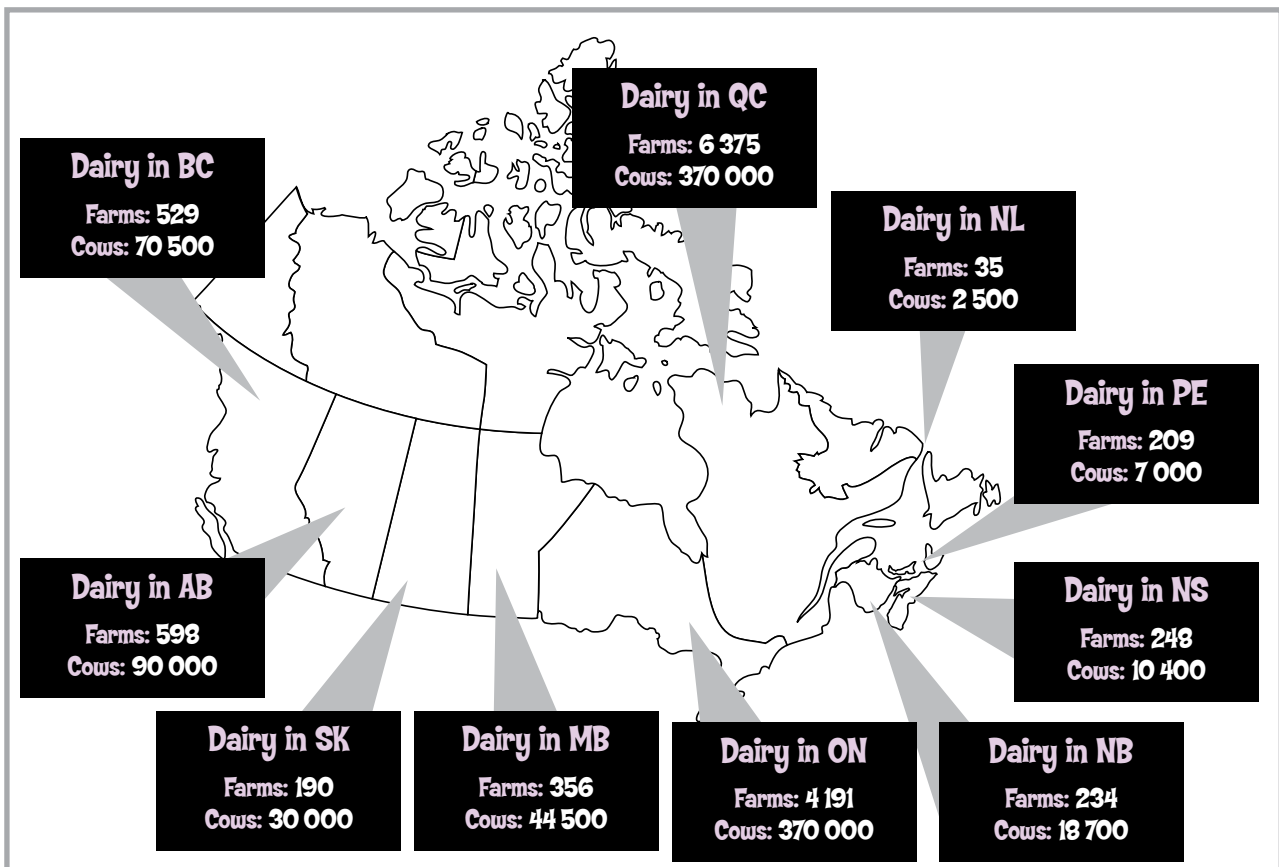
Farming in the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Lowlands

This region has a high population and most of Canada's largest cities are found here. Much of the land is used for crop and animal farms. This region has the highest total number of dairy farms, with most of them concentrated in the St. Lawrence River Valley of southern Ontario and Quebec.

Rank the top three natural resources that you think are the most important to dairy farmers.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Why did you rank them in this way?



Dairy farms are found in every province of Canada. Quebec has the most dairy farms of any province. Newfoundland has the fewest. Why do you think there are no dairy farms in the Canadian territories of Yukon, Nunavut, and the Northwest Territories?

Farms and Canadian Cities

Have you ever heard the question, “Which came first – the chicken or the egg?” Which do you think came first? Cities or farms?

Although farming was actually the basis of many of Canada’s early settlements and communities, modern-day cities and farms may have a closer connection than you might think.

Cattle were brought to Canada in the 1500s and early 1600s, along with the practice of using cows to provide milk. Dairy cows were part of early European settlements in Acadia and New France in the 1600s. They were also brought west as western Canada was settled by Europeans in the 1800s.

A cow was usually part of a farming family and was used to provide their milk. Extra milk was made into butter and cheese for the family’s use. Early settlements and trading posts also had nearby farms that were depended upon to raise animals and grow plants that provided food. So farms were part of the early beginnings of many of Canada’s future cities and towns.

Today, Canada is becoming more and more **urbanized**. This means that more and more people are living in **urban centres**, such as towns and cities. A large urban area is a place where people live, shop, and work. Statistics Canada calls these large cities and the towns, villages, or land areas close by **metropolitan** areas. There are 33 of them in Canada.

When we think of a large city, we most likely do not think about farms. However, in 2006, more than 35 000 of the 229 373 farms in Canada were located in or near a large metropolitan area. Almost half of all dairy farms in Canada were located in or near a large metropolitan area.



What do you think is the most important benefit of a dairy farm that is located near a large city?

What is the benefit to the dairy farm?

What is the benefit to the people who live in the large city?

Farms that are located close to cities have some benefits. These farms are close to people who buy their products and who can work on the farms. Therefore, farms that grow fruits and vegetables, greenhouses, and poultry and egg farms tend to be the ones that locate close to cities because they usually sell their products directly to people. These types of products can also be **perishable**, which means they can spoil quickly. Farming in a location that is close to people also helps to make sure that the products are fresh.

However, the land that is needed for farms can be more expensive. Farms that need large areas of land can also be more difficult to establish near large metropolitan area as this land is not always available. For example, beef cattle ranches and dairy farms often need additional land for grazing and are therefore not always found close to large cities. As well, **urban sprawl**, or the expansion of city areas, can “eat up” land that is suitable for agriculture.

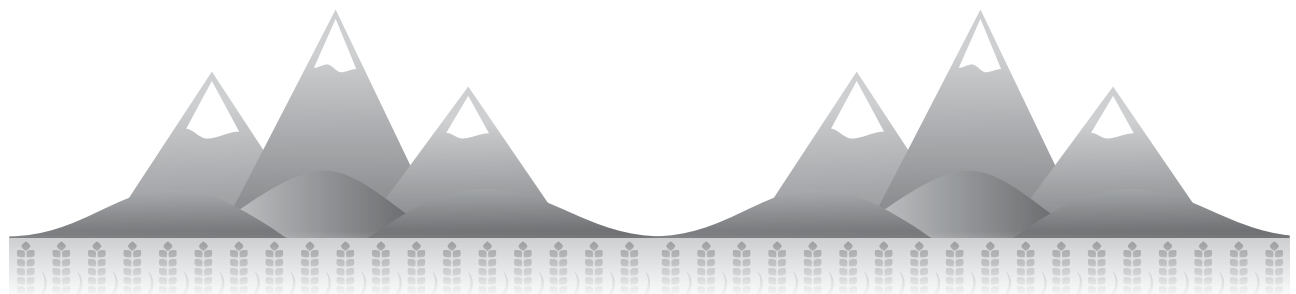
From Statistics Canada: *Farming in Canada's CMAs*.
www.statcan.gc.ca/ca-ra2006/articles/cacma-rarmr-eng.htm

Population density refers to the number of people living in an area. For example, the population density of all of Canada averages about 5 people per square kilometre.

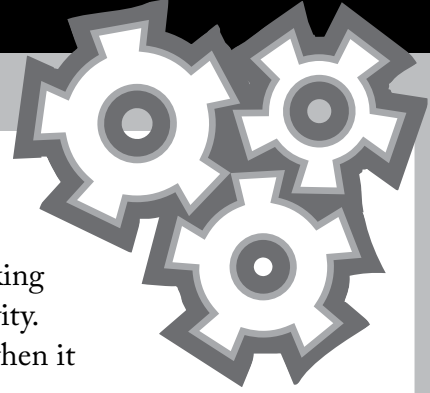
The population density of a rural community is lower than the population density of an urban community. Why is this so?



Go to the *Dairy Drive Interactive App* in the **Dairy Drive** inquiry page or the **Game Corner** on the *Moo2You* website at www.moo2you.ca. Look at the Population Density map. How would you describe where most Canadians live?



Making Comparisons

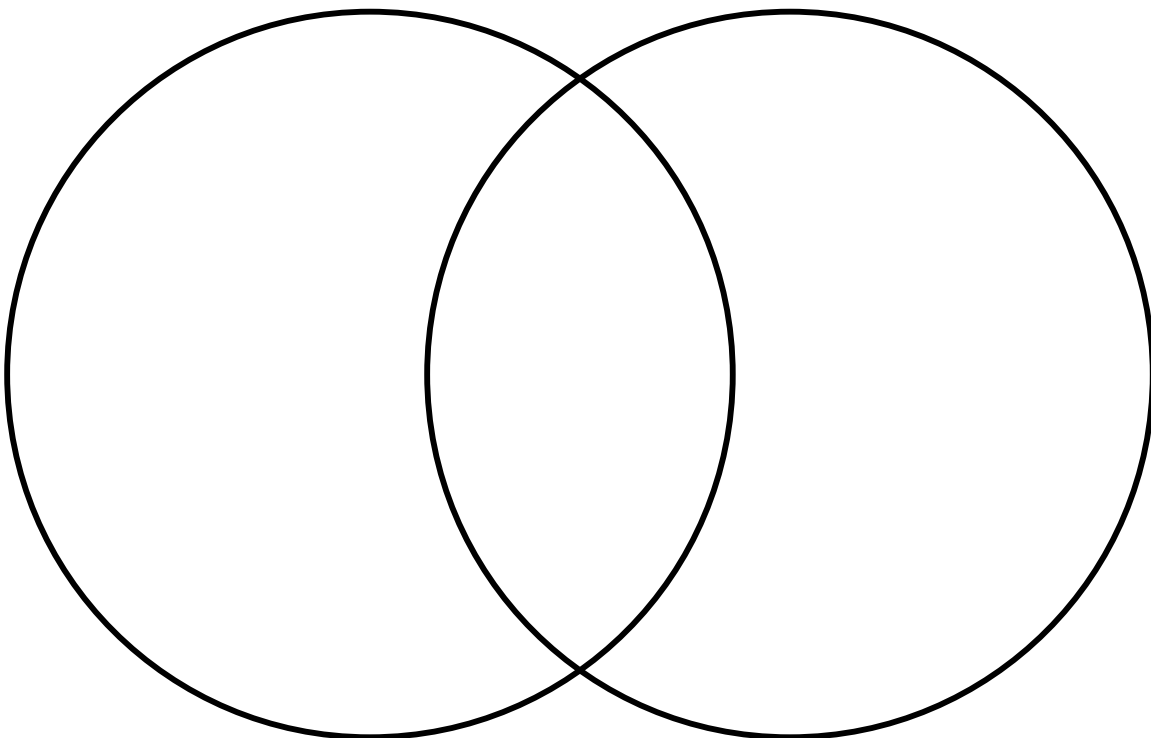


Canada's population is changing. More people live in cities and fewer people are engaged in farming.

1. Canada's dairy farms are spread throughout the country, making dairy farming and production an important agricultural activity. However, some of Canada's regions have more than others when it comes to the number of dairy farms and cows!
Why do you think these differences exist?

2. Canada's communities are often described as either urban or rural. How would you describe an urban community? How would you describe a rural community?

Use the Venn diagram below, or create your own, to compare urban and rural communities. Describe two ways that each type of community is unique or different in the outside circles of the Venn diagram. Describe at least two similarities in the middle intersecting circle.



3. Why do you think each of the types of farms listed in the T-Chart below might be ones that are located closer to cities or large metropolitan areas? Write your reasons in the T-Chart, or make one of your own.

Fruit and Vegetable Farms	
Horticulture (greenhouses)	
Poultry and Egg Farms	

Do you think dairy farms would tend to be located further from or closer to large metropolitan centres? Why?

What types of farms do you think are least likely to be located close to a large metropolitan centre? Why?

4. In what type of community do you live – urban or rural?

Are there any farms near or in your community? What type?
