

DAIRY CATTLE FUN FACTS

Milk is a very unique food. Babies can live on milk alone for the first six months of life. All animals that feed milk to their young are called mammals. You are a mammal and whales are mammals. Camels, bats, seals and bears are all mammals. And the animal that makes the milk we most commonly drink is also a mammal – The Cow!

The most popular and common breed of dairy cow in Canada is the Holstein which originally came from North Holland. You can recognize these cows by the large black patches on their white bodies. This breed produces the most milk of all and makes up 95% of the dairy cows in Canada. The remaining 5% of dairy cows includes four other breeds, Jersey, Guernsey, Ayrshire and Brown Swiss.

The Jersey is light brown with big brown eyes and produces rich, yummy milk. Originally, Jerseys came from a small island in the English Channel as did the Guernsey cow. The Guernsey is a golden colour with white spots. The Ayrshire is from Scotland and is white with reddish-brown or silver grey. How do you think these cows first got to Canada? Just like Canadian people whose ancestors came from other countries, the dairy cows that are commonly found in Canada originally came from overseas. As people moved here, they brought dairy cattle with them!

Moo Trivia

Speaking of milk...People who speak two languages are called bilingual. Now you can be mooilingual. Learn how to say "Milk, really cool" in some other languages:

- French: lait, tres cool
- German: milch, sher cool
- Ukrainian: moloko, douzha cool
- Italian: latte, molto cool
- Dutch: melek, heal cool
- Chinese: nai, ho cool

The Amazing Milk Machine

When you look at a dairy cow, you wouldn't guess that she eats tonnes of food each year but it's true. Most of this food energy is used by the cow to make about 24 L of nutritious milk every day. That would sure fill up your fridge. She eats about 75,000 kilocalories a day. When you consider that an average adult like your mom, dad or teacher only eats about 2,000 kilocalories in a day, the cow really can eat an "amoozing" amount of food!

Why is milk sometimes blue?

Nutrients from the cow's feed, along with water, fill the cow's udder to make milk. It is the

nutrients that give milk its colour. The light reflects off the particles of milk fat making it appear creamy white. When the milk fat is not there, as in skim milk, the milk has a bluish colour. This is because one of the nutrients, riboflavin (Rybo-flay-vin), is blue in colour!

Udderly Awesome

When the cow's udder is full of milk, it is milking time. The udder is a pouch with four compartments inside, each with a teat for the milk to be sucked out of. Dairy farmers used to milk their cows by hand but now it is much easier, faster and more sanitary to milk the cows by machine. Some farmers milk their cows two times a day and other do it three times, but no matter what, they have to milk cows every day of the year. Therefore, it is important to have the barn set up in a way that will be easy to milk the cows and save the most time.