

DAIRY COWS

Facts & Figures Presented by UF/IFAS Extension



Cow: A female that has had at least one baby.



Calf: A baby, less than one year old.



Heifer: A female that has never had a baby.



Bull: A male that is capable of breeding.

Housing

Many dairy cows live in free stalls, where they are kept in comfortable and clean facilities with soft bedding and access to food and water 24 hours per day! These barns are equipped with fans and water systems that mist the cows to keep them cool in the summer and windbreaks to protect them from the cold in the winter.

BREEDS

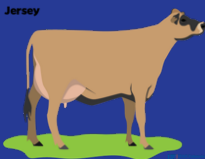
There are 6 major breeds of dairy cattle in the US. Today, 90% of the dairy cows are Holsteins and they weigh from 1,500 to 1,800 lbs!



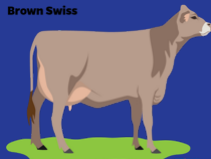
Holstein



Guernsey



Jersey



Brown Swiss



Ayrshire



Milking Shorthorn

Nutrition

Cows are fed a balanced total mixed ration (TMR), which is a perfect mix of forages, grains and supplements! On average, a dairy cow spends 6 to 7 hours a day eating and may consume more than 100 pounds of food and 50 gallons of water each day! A cow's body uses part of the food to grow and stay healthy and the other part of the food to make milk.

Milk

A cow starts to produce milk at around 2 years old when she has her first calf. After giving birth, production of milk continues for approximately 300 days. She is then given a 2 month resting period before repeating the cycle. A healthy cow is milked at least twice a day and can produce from 6-10 gallons of milk per day. A cow may produce nearly 200,000 glasses of milk in her lifetime!

Digestive System

A cow is a ruminant. She has 1 large stomach with 4 separate compartments! Cows swallow food without chewing it. The food goes into the first and second compartments, the rumen and the reticulum. The cow then brings up some food (cud), chews it, and swallows again. Her cud then goes into the third compartment, the omasum. From there it moves to the fourth compartment, the abomasum, where digestion actually occurs.

