

Dairy

The milk most of us drink comes from the udder of a female bovine animal, a cow. The primary purpose for milk is as food for the calf. Although females from all cattle breeds produce milk and meat, some cattle are better at giving milk, and some are better at providing meat. Holstein is the breed that produces the largest quantity of milk.

The dairy farmer's work day begins and ends with milking. Most dairy farmers today use milking machines. One of the most important jobs is keeping everything very clean. That is the only way to make sure bacteria doesn't get into the milk and cause it to spoil. In 1856, Dr. Louis Pasteur discovered that heat kills bad germs. Today we use this process, called pasteurization, to make milk safe to drink.

After the cows are milked, the milk is cooled and stored in a stainless steel tank. The milk stays in the tank until it is time for it to go to the milk processing plant.

When it is time to take the milk to the processing plant, a stainless steel tank truck comes to the farm and pumps the milk from the cooling tank. The truck's tank keeps the milk cool during the trip to the processing plant.

Cows produce twice the amount of milk today as they did during the 1960s. Milk is used to make butter, cheese, ice cream, yogurt and other dairy products. It is also used in the production of nonfood items like glue and other adhesives. One quart of milk weighs 2.15 pounds. It takes about 23 pounds of milk to make one pound of butter. It takes about 12 pounds of milk to make one gallon of ice cream.

Milk was named Oklahoma's official state beverage on November 2, 2002. In 2016, Oklahoma had an average of 37,000 milk cows. Dairy was the 7th most valuable agricultural commodity in Oklahoma in 2015.

Vocabulary

adhesive—a substance that sticks

bacteria—any of a group of single-celled microorganisms that live in soil, water, the bodies of plants and animals, or matter obtained from living things and are important because of their chemical effects and disease-causing abilities

bovine—any of a group of ruminant mammals including the oxen, bison, and buffalo that have hollow horns and are related to the sheep and goats

breed—a group of animals or plants usually found only under human care and different from related kinds
commodity—a product of agriculture or mining

dairy—the department of farming or of a farm that is concerned with the production of milk, butter, and cheese

pasteurization—the process of heating a liquid (as milk) to a temperature high enough and keeping it at that temperature long enough to kill many objectionable germs and then cooling it rapidly without causing a major change in its chemical composition

udder—a large bag-shaped organ (as of a cow) consisting of two or more mammary glands enclosed in a common pouch but with each having a separate nipple