

**Top 5 MI Counties
with Dairy Cattle (2000)**

- 1) Sanilac
- 2) Clinton
- 3) Allegan
- 4) Huron
- 5) Ottawa

DAIRY CATTLE

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Background Information

Dairy cattle were first brought to North America in 1625 to the Plymouth Colony, in what is now Massachusetts. Wisconsin and California lead the United States in milk production. Michigan ranks eighth nationally in milk production.

Michigan offers a variety of forages, rolling terrain, plentiful water and low-cost feeds. Alfalfa is the primary forage eaten by dairy cows. Australia, New Zealand and Uruguay are major grass-fed milk producers.

Growth and Feeding

After her calf is born, a cow begins producing milk. This is called "freshening." A cow can freshen only after she has given birth to a calf.

The first milk the cow gives is called colostrum, which contains nutrients and antibodies that the calf needs to stay healthy. The calf is separated immediately after birth and fed the mother's milk for the first week with a large nursing bottle. Milk replacer is used until weaning at three to four months.

Cows are milked by machine, usually twice a day, every 12 hours. If they are milked at 3 p.m., they must also be milked at 3 a.m. Cows are milked for 305 days or about 10 months. Then the cow's body needs to rest and store nutrients before she has her next calf. After the calf is born, the cow will resume giving milk.

The average dairy cow in Michigan produces 16,833 pounds of milk in 305 days. That's about 1,951 gallons of milk. Milk is stored in refrigerated tanks at the dairy farm until it is picked up by a refrigerated tank truck and taken to a dairy processing plant. There the milk is homogenized and pasteurized and put into containers if used as fresh milk. Different refrigerated trucks deliver the packaged milk to stores.

Dairy Cattle Nutrition

Most heifers are bred to freshen at two years of age. After they give birth, they join the dairy herd and produce milk. The male calves are sold to feedlots, where they are fed until they are taken to market for their meat.

Dairy cattle are ruminant animals with four compartments in their stomachs; their digestive tract is the same as beef cattle. Dairy cows weigh 1,300 to 1,500 pounds and are fed high-quality feed. They eat grains such as ground corn, grain sorghum, barley, oats and soybean meal. Their diet also includes vitamins, minerals and salt.

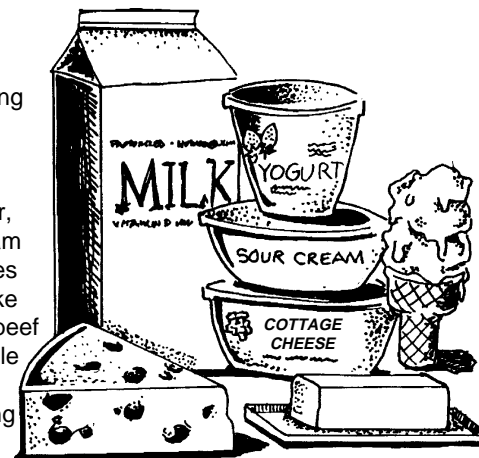
Dairy cows are also fed forages, such as high-quality alfalfa hay and whole corn plants (silage). On average, a single cow consumes 40 pounds of grain and hay and 50 pounds of silage each day. Water is another important nutrient for dairy cows; every day they need to consume about 30 gallons of water or the equivalent of a full bathtub.

Many dairy producers use computers in their feeding operations to balance rations and feed cows. Some computers read the cow's identification tag and gives her a proper mix of grains, vitamins and minerals. This is determined by her age and how much milk she produces.

Ninety-nine percent of all dairy cattle in the United States today are the Holstein breed, which are large-bodied with a black and white coat. In Michigan, 90 percent of dairy cattle are Holsteins which give a large quantity of milk. The smaller-bodied breeds - Guernsey, Jersey and Brown Swiss - give a high protein milk and high butter fat milk.

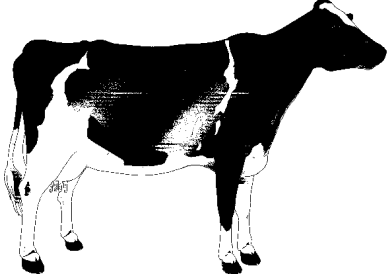

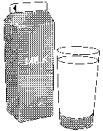

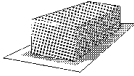
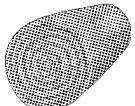

Products

Milk and other dairy products provide 76 percent of the calcium in the United States food supply, plus energy, protein and vitamins. Chocolate milk is made by adding sweetener and chocolate or cocoa to whole milk and is an alternative for people who don't drink white milk. Cheese, butter, ice cream, yogurt and sour cream are also made from milk. It takes about ten pounds of milk to make one pound of cheese. As with beef cattle, many important non-edible by-products come from dairy cattle (gelatin, leather, life-saving drugs and much more).



Did you know . . .

- A Holstein's spots are like a fingerprint or snowflake. No two cows have exactly the same pattern of spots.
- Annually, some 16 to 20 percent of Michigan's milk production is processed as Grade A fluid milk for your drinking pleasure. The remainder of all milk produced goes into the many other products you're familiar with . . . cheese, butter, cottage cheese, yogurt, etc.
- Top dairy product export countries include Mexico, Japan, Canada and Russia.

		<h3>The amazing dairy cow</h3>	
One Day's Consumption		One Day's Production	
35 gallons of water		7.0 gallons of milk	
+ 20 pounds of grain and concentrated feeds		or	
+ 35 pounds of hay and silage		2.6 pounds of butter	or
			6 pounds of cheese



For information on other programs and materials available, please contact: Michigan Farm Bureau, Attn: Deb Schmucker, 7373 W. Saginaw Hwy., Lansing, Michigan 48909; PHONE: 800-292-2680, FAX: 517-323-6604.