

The story of milk



The calves live in pens and are fed for a few weeks on powdered milk feed mixed with water. Later they learn to eat solid foods like cereal pellets and hay. When they grow bigger they go into the paddocks to graze on grass. When they are fully grown at three years old they are ready to have a calf and produce milk.

Growing calves



Cows give birth to their first calf at the age of three years. They have a calf every year for up to twelve years. For a few days the calf feeds on the mother's milk which it sucks from the teats. All mammals make milk for their babies.

Cow and calf



These cows are of the Jersey breed and they give rich creamy milk. In the summer the cows live in paddocks where they graze on grass. As they digest the grass they turn some of the plant nutrients into milk. They use up some of the energy from the grass when they move and breathe. They also produce manure from the waste parts of the food. Manure is a useful natural fertilizer to help the grass grow again. Every day the cows move to a new paddock to eat fresh grass. In winter the cows live in large indoor yards where they can walk around and eat preserved grass called silage.

Cows





Recycling

Glass milk bottles can be re-used by the dairy several times before they are recycled. Plastic milk cartons can be recycled into new plastic containers. This is a good way to prevent landfill waste and to stop our country from using so much oil. Did you know that plastic is made from oil? We all need to recycle as much plastic as we can. Oil is a fossil fuel and our supplies will run out in the future.



Transport and processing

The milk flows along pipes into a refrigerated tank where it is kept cold until the milk tanker arrives later that day. The tanker transports the milk to a large dairy. Most milk for drinking is heated in a large vat to kill off bacteria then it is quickly cooled to stop it from going stale. The milk is placed in glass bottles or plastic cartons. The containers are delivered to shops or to customers by a milkman. Rich milk from Jersey cows is good for producing butter, cheese, yoghurt or ice-cream.



Eating

Milk can be drunk cold, put into hot drinks or eaten as food. Milk and milk foods like cheese and yoghurt give us protein, vitamins and minerals. Calcium is an important mineral to make bones and teeth strong. All these dairy foods need to be kept in the fridge.

Good for

Growth and Health



Milking

Twice a day the cows go into the milking parlour, six at a time. They are given rich food to eat as the farmer washes their udders and teats. A machine is put on the teats. It gently squeezes out the milk into a glass container. The cows choose which order they come into the parlour. Some like to be first and others are happy to stand in the collecting yard and wait their turn.