

## Got Milk? - June is National Dairy Month

By: Corine Burgess

Got milk? You might want to go get some if you don't. June is National Dairy Month and it is a great time to appreciate all of the benefits we derive from dairy products and those who produce them. To get some perspective on the life of a dairy farmer, let's put ourselves in their boots for just a moment.

Will you make sure that the cows are milked three times a day? Vaccinate the entire herd against diseases? Sell the manure to a local land owner? Join a dairy coop? Keep records of all the purchases, sales and taxes? Maintain a database of all the goings on of the farm? Work in any and all kinds of weather including hurricanes to ensure your animals' safety? Get up before the sun rises and come in after dark? Make sure that all the cows are fed, exercised, healthy and happy?

No wonder an entire month is dedicated to dairy appreciation. Dairy plays an important role in our everyday lives. Milk and dairy products contain many nutrients and provide a quick and easy way of supplying these nutrients to the diet within relatively few calories. Dairy products provide calcium, phosphorous, magnesium, protein, vitamin B12, Vitamin A, zinc, riboflavin, folate, vitamin C and iodine. One glass of milk alone can make a contribution to the daily recommended intake of many important nutrients for all age groups.

National Dairy Month, which started out as National Milk Month, was created in 1937 and was established to help stabilize dairy demands during time of peak production. Dairy Month was initially funded by a one cent per pound butterfat tax in the month of June. Since the 30's Dairy Month has grown by leaps and bounds. The American Dairy Association became the leader in the event's campaigns in 1955. Today the month is celebrated by giving away free dairy products, dairy food demonstrations, cow milking contests, cattle shows and even parades.

Over 1,000 new dairy products are introduced every year. And that's a good thing since dairy products such as milk contain nine essential nutrients which help to manage weight, reduce risk of high blood pressure, osteoporosis and certain cancers. Dairy contains protein which helps build and repair muscle tissue and vitamin A to help maintain healthy skin.

To help you celebrate Dairy Month, here are some interesting "dairy facts:"

- The first cow in America arrived in Jamestown colony in 1611. Until the 1850's, nearly every family had its own cow. The first regular shipment of milk by railroad was between Orange County, New York, and New York City and began in 1841.
- In 1856, Gail Borden invented the condensed milk process. This process removed some of the water from milk so it would take up less space. Refrigeration came into use in 1880, and the first pasteurizing machine was introduced in 1895.
- Dairying has improved through the years. Today, one cow can produce the milk that it once took 10 cows to produce.
- Around 9.2 million cows are being milked on 110,000 farms in the United States. More than 99% of all dairy farms are family owned and operated.

- Cows are milked for an average of 3-4 years. A cow must have a calf in order to produce milk. Calves are fed milk until they are 8-9 weeks old.
- The average cow is 2 years old when she has her first calf. Calves are fed milk until they are 8-9 weeks old. A young female cow is called a heifer.
- Before milking machines were invented in 1894, farmers could only milk about 6 cows per hour. Today, farmers use machines to milk more than 100 cows per hour.
- Cows are ruminants, which are cud chewing mammals. Sheep and camels also are ruminants. A cow chews her cud (regurgitated, partially digested food) for up to 8 hours each day.
- Dairy cows provide 90% of the world's milk supply. The best cows give over 25 gallons of milk each day. That's 400 glasses of milk! U.S. cows give an average of 2,000 gallons of milk per year. That's over 30,000 glasses of milk!
- Contrary to popular belief, cows do not have 4 stomachs; they have 4 digestive compartments: The rumen holds up to 50 gallons of partially digested food. This is where cud comes from. Good bacteria in the rumen helps digest the cow's food and provides protein for the cow. The reticulum is called the hardware stomach because if cows accidentally eat hardware (like a piece of fencing scrap), it will often lodge here causing no further damage. The omasum is sort of like a filter. The abomasum which is like our stomach.
- Cows drink about a bathtub full of water and eat around 40 pounds of food a day.
- Cows have 32 teeth: 8 incisors on the bottom front, 6 molars on the top and bottom of each side, a tough pad of skin instead of teeth on the top front.
- Holsteins are black and white, and each has a unique pattern. A Holstein calf weighs 80-110 lbs. at birth. A mature Holstein cow weighs 1,300-1,500 lbs.
- Jerseys vary from dark brown or fawn, and sometimes are splashed with white. A Jersey calf weighs around 60 lbs. at birth. A mature Jersey cow weighs 900-1,000 lbs.
- The average body temperature of a cow is 101.5°F.
- Water buffalo, camels, goats, sheep, horses, and reindeer are also milked.

#### Milk Fun Fact

Q: Who invented the "best before" date on foods?

A: Al Capone.