



## FACT SHEET

# ANIMAL CARE ON DAIRY FARMS



**Dairy farmers live and work on their farms and treat cows with respect and care, knowing this is the right thing to do for the animal and their well being. Nutritious diets, healthy living conditions and top-notch medical care are all essential for a healthy herd, and these are among the many animal care practices routinely used by dairy farmers.**

There are several initiatives in place that demonstrate dairy farmers' commitment to animal care. In 2009, the dairy community launched the National Dairy FARM (Farmers Assuring Responsible Management) Program. The FARM program is a nationwide, verifiable animal well-being program that brings consistency and uniformity to on-farm animal care and production practices. Dairy farmers, animal scientists and veterinarians continually explore ways to improve the comfort of dairy cows.

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**Currently, the FARM program represents more than 98% of the nation's milk supply.**

Learn more at [www.NationalDairyFarm.com](http://www.NationalDairyFarm.com).



## TYPICAL PRACTICES ON MODERN DAIRY FARMS INCLUDE:

### HEALTH & MEDICAL ATTENTION

- Cows receive regular veterinary care, including periodic check-ups, preventative vaccinations and prompt treatment of illness.
- A cow that is being treated with antibiotics is separated from the milking herd and placed in a separate area, so her milk does not enter the food supply. She is not put back into the herd until the antibiotics have cleared her system.
- All milk is strictly tested for antibiotics on the farm and at the processing plant. Any milk that tests positive is disposed of immediately and does not enter the food supply. In such cases, the farmer responsible for the milk is required to pay for the full tanker truck of milk.

### FOOD & SHELTER

- Dairy farmers provide clean, dry bedding for their cows and access to food and water 24 hours a day.
- Today's dairy farms use fans, sprinkler systems, curtains or wind breaks to maintain temperature controls in hot or cold weather.
- Professional animal nutritionists help dairy farmers develop a scientifically formulated, balanced and nutritious diet for their cows, called a ration. Diets include hay, grains, protein sources and vitamins and minerals. Cows are also fed a number of by-products, such as cotton seed hulls and citrus pulp, which they can turn into nutrient-rich dairy foods.

### DEHORNING/DISBUDDING

- Cows' horns are a safety concern to humans and other cows. Dehorning is a practice used for decades to help reduce the risk of injury.
- It is a recommended and standard practice to perform dehorning at an early age. This "disbudding" of non-developed horn buds is a simple procedure that doesn't require anesthesia.
- For a cow with developed horns, best industry practices will ensure the comfort and safety of an animal through sedation or anesthesia.

### CALVES

- To ensure the best individual care and monitoring of both animals, especially in the first 24 hours, calves are separated from their mothers to live in clean and dry individual pens for their first three months. These pens have ample space for calves to freely move around and protect them from larger members of the herd and bad weather.
- Farmers bottle-feed calves individually to make sure they receive proper nutrition. This guarantees calves receive colostrum, a mother cow's first milk, to help boost their immune system.
- When calves are healthy and strong enough they join a herd of other young calves who grow and mature together.

### ANIMAL HANDLING & TRANSPORTATION

- Cows move on their own from their pens and fields as well as to and from the milking parlor on a daily basis.
- While most dairy cows spend their lives on a single farm, they may be transported. They are handled carefully in a manner that minimizes stress.

