

From grass to glass – the journey of milk



In Britain we drink around five billion litres of milk each year. A typical milk tank can hold up to 10,000 litres of milk – enough for more than 35,000 bowls of cereal!

Of all the milk produced on British dairy farms, half is for drinking and the rest is made into cheese, yogurt and other dairy products.



1

The dairy farm

There are thousands of dairy farms in the UK. Dairy farms are all different shapes and sizes, with small herds of 50 cows to farms with more than 1,000+ cows. The farmer's most important job is to look after the health and welfare of the cows. Farmers also look after the countryside, maintaining hedgerows, planting trees and establishing new ponds.



2

The cow

Most British dairy cows eat grass in the field during the summer and silage (pickled grass or maize) in the winter – around 25-50kg a day. They drink around 60 litres of water, although some drink more if they produce more milk.

Each cow wears ear tags with a unique number – this is also on their cattle passport.

Most dairy cows graze outdoors during the summer and stay indoors during the winter. There is plenty of space inside the shed, allowing the cows to move around, be sociable, exercise and rest.



3

Milking

Cows are milked on average 2-3 times a day.

Milking is not painful or uncomfortable, it is like the cow feeding its baby calf. Once the cows have been milked the milk is chilled and stored. A milk tanker calls at the farm to collect the milk. It is then taken to be processed.



Processing

The raw milk from the farm is treated to stop any naturally occurring bacteria turning it sour. This process is called pasteurisation. Some types of milk have some of the fat removed, e.g. semi-skimmed milk. The milk is put into bottles or cartons and is sent to different places for sale.

Milk is also used to make cheese, yogurt, cream and butter.

4

In the shops

The fresh milk is available for sale. It is kept cold to keep it at its best. Some people have milk delivered to their home, others buy it from local shops or supermarkets. Many school children have milk at school as a drink.

5



6

Drink and enjoy

Milk can be enjoyed as a drink, poured on breakfast cereal or used in many different recipes.