

# Dairy Facts

## RHET

In Scotland, there are 888 dairy herds, and 180,293 dairy cows giving an average dairy herd of 203 cows.

Once the calf has had its first drink of colostrum from the cow, it is taken away and reared with other calves. Colostrum is another name for the first milk the cow produces - it is particularly important as it contains antibodies which get the calf off to a good start.

Some dairy herds stay inside year round whilst others are outside in the warm months and come indoors over the winter.

Dairy cows, like all mammals, need to produce a calf before they produce milk.

Within the dairy herd the cows are all at different stages of lactation (milk production). Peak milk production occurs soon after calving. Milk yields then drop off until the cow goes into her rest period. During this period she is not milked at all.

Like humans, dairy cows need a balanced diet. Animal nutritionists work to provide the correct balance of nutrients to cows at different life stages.

Whole milk is what the cow gives us and by removing some of the fat you can get semi skimmed and skimmed milk. All milk is low in fat and a good source of calcium and protein.

Dairy cows, like all other livestock have tags in their ears. This ensures traceability and helps with ensuring quality of product.

Dairy cows produce female calves, which will become future milkers' in the herd. Male calves do not produce milk so are either reared for meat production or culled.

Some Scottish dairy farms use sexed semen. This means they can increase the number of female calves being born.

Dairy cows stay in the herd for on average 6.5 years after which milk production drops off and the cow leaves the herd and enters the meat supply chain.

Whilst outside cows eat grass and when indoors they also eat grass (in the form of silage), cereals like barley, wheat, oats and high protein foods like peas and soya.