



News Release

United Dairymen of Idaho

10221 West Emerald, Suite 180
Boise, Idaho 83704
(208) 327-7050
(208) 327-7054 fax

For Immediate Release

Contact: Cheri Storey
Communications Director
cstorey@udidaho.org

Our Animals Are Our Livelihoods

May, 2007 – Boise, Idaho — Happy, healthy cows mean more than a sound business investment. For the nation’s dairy farmers, it’s a way of life.

“For dairy farmers, caring about our animals means more than just housing and feed them.” said Tom Dorsey, a Caldwell dairy farmer. “They are our livelihood and we know we have to give them the best care possible.”

Dairy farmers across the country rely on the health and happiness of their dairy cows to stay in business. They make significant investments in housing, feeding and medical care.

“It’s critical to keep cows dry and healthy,” Dorsey said. “When you’re comfortable and healthy, you do a better job. Dairy cows are no different.”

Many farmers have free-stall barns, meaning the cows are “free” to move about to eat, drink or rest whenever and wherever they like. These barns also provide shade and protection from the elements.

Inside these barns, farmers provide comfortable bedding for the cows in the form of sand, wood chips, recycled shredded rubber, or mattresses. The bedding is replaced and refreshed with clean straw several times a day, so cows always climb into freshly made beds. In warmer regions of the country, farmers use a system of spray misters and large fans to keep cows cool.

It takes more than creature comforts to make cows content, however. Dairy farmers rely on experts in nutrition for advice on feeding their cows. Dairy nutritionists recommend scientifically

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formulated and balanced diets that consist of hay, grains, protein sources, and other vitamins and minerals. Farmers also recycle different ingredients — such as citrus pulp, brewers' mash and whole cottonseed — that would otherwise end up in landfills.

“It’s a science in and of itself,” said Dr. Bill Stouder, a Magic Valley dairy farmer and veterinarian. “Dairy farmers rely on the right mix to keep their cows well-fed, content and able to produce milk.”

Another important part of a cow’s diet is clean water. Cows drink anywhere from 25 to 50 gallons of water a day.

“Dairy farmers keep close track of everything their cows eat and drink. It’s critical to a successful dairy,” Dr. Stouder said.

Cows also must receive proper medical care. Cows are no different than people. They sometimes become ill and require medical attention. Farmers work with large-animal veterinarians who can diagnose and treat an illness with the proper medication. Any cows that receive medicine to aid in a speedy recovery are removed from the healthy herd and won’t rejoin their herd mates until their milk tests free of antibiotics.

During milking, dairy farmers and their employees are constantly checking and monitoring their animals. Nutritious diets, comfortable living conditions and solid medical care are all part of taking good care of their animals. This includes regular veterinarian check-ups across the entire farm, either monthly, bimonthly or, on some farms, weekly, to keep an eye on the wellness of the herd. Vaccinations and prompt treatment of illnesses are among the many practices used by dairy farmers to ensure healthy herds.

Dr. Stouder said many dairy farmers go through training to recognize health problems early.

“The goal is to keep dairy farmers in business by making sure their animals are healthy and get the proper medical treatment,” Dr. Stouder said. “When we identify things early, we can prevent problems and keep milk moving to the public.”

Back at Tom Dorsey’s farm, the cows are as healthy as they can be. They’re free to pick their spots to sleep, their health checks out, and they get the best veterinary care available.

“The cows are happy, and so am I,” Dorsey said.

For more information about dairy farming, visit www.dairyfarmingtoday.org.

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United Dairymen of Idaho (UDI) is the local planning and management organization responsible for increasing demand for U.S. produced dairy products on behalf of Idaho’s dairy farm families.