



## Lesson: The Hatcher Family Dairy Farm Tour

**Objective:** To understand what happens every day on a modern dairy farm

### Introduction

Have the class prepare a K-W-L chart about what they Know about a dairy farm, what they Want to know and for when you return, what they Learned. This can be done as in interactive exercise or have the class prepare individual charts to be shared and completed after the tour.

Some suggested questions to get the conversation going:

- What goes on during the night?
- Do the cows sleep standing up or do they lay down to sleep?
- Who wakes up first?
- What happens first thing in the morning?
- What happens when the cows leave?
- What happens in the barn when they return?
- How do the cows stay warm/cool?
- Does the mother cow recognize her children once they are grown?
- Do cows ever play?
- What three kinds of cows did you see?

### Vocabulary

straw	overalls	nipple
hay	manure	suckle
udder	Jersey	clover
cow	Guernsey	milking parlor
bull	Brown Swiss	moo
corn	Holstein	

Have students define each word and use each word in a sentence.

Place each word in a hat and ask a student to pull a word out of a hat and use that word in a sentence.

### Exercises

1. Have the class draw a four part picture of the barn at various times in the day. e.g. early morning, mid morning, milking time and night time.
2. Have the class write a paragraph about their favorite part of the tour.
3. Have the class write a paragraph/essay from the perspective of a day in the life of one of the cows.
4. Use some old cardboard boxes to make a barn large enough for one or two class members to get inside. That can be where the cows get milked or where the baby cows were.

## Fun Facts from the Tour

Q. Which type of cow gives more milk, Jersey, Holstein or Brown Swiss?

A. Holsteins and Brown Swiss give more milk than a Jersey, but the milk from the Jersey cows is much creamier.

Q. Which kind of cow weighs more?

A. A Holstein weighs 400-500 pounds more than a Jersey or Brown Swiss.

Q. What is a ruminant?

A. A ruminant is an animal that digests plant-based food by initially softening it within its first stomach, then regurgitating the semi-digested mass, or cud, and chewing it again. The process of re-chewing the cud is called "ruminating". This is a very efficient way of breaking down the grasses that the cows eat, that will end up as milk.

Q. What kind of teeth do ruminants have?

A. They only have bottom teeth. None on top.

Q. When do cows eat?

A. Mostly they eat during the day, but the hotter it gets, the more likely they are to eat at night.

Q. Do you name the cows?

A. Yes, every cow has a name, they are part of our family. And, just like your doctor does, we keep complete medical records for each of our cows. We even track them on their family tree!

Q. Can you tell the difference between a beef cow and a milk cow just by looking at it?

A. Yes, the milk cows are much thinner – you can even see their backbone. The difference is kind of like between a runner and a weightlifter in humans.

Q. Do you keep all the cows together?

A. No they are broken into groups, like in a school. The older cows are in one field; those that are pregnant or about to become pregnant are in another field; the teenage cows are in a separate field and the babies stay in the barn.

Q. Do female cows have horns?

A. Yes, some do.

Q. Do cows sweat?

A. No, they can't. They cool off by panting and staying in the shade.

Q. Do the cows play or just stand there all day?

A. They love to play! Our cows will chase each other, and sometimes even chase the wild turkeys on the farm.

Q. Do cows like people?

A. We're not sure that they like to cuddle, but the most friendly type are Jerseys? Could it be that that is what helps make their milk creamier?

Q. How long do dairy cows live?

A. On many farms, they only live about 5 years. Because of our natural farming practices, many of our cows live to be 10 and older. Our oldest, Emma, who is 12, still gives us milk every day!

Q. What do cows eat?

A. Diet is extremely important to ensure that the most nutrients possible are in our milk. Every day our cows graze on our natural pasture of grasses and clover. We also supplement their diet with corn. Even in winter, when normal grass does not grow as much, we plant winter grasses to make sure that our cows always have the best food and that our milk has the highest level of nutrients possible. In fact, our whole milk in the springtime has as much Omega-3 fat in it as fresh fish! That's what natural farming is all about.

Q. Do cows with bigger udders give more milk?

A. No, the size of the udder has no bearing on how much milk the cow will give.

Q. How much milk does a cow give?

A. About 8 gallons per milking.

Q. Do the cows get milked in the same spot every time?

A. Absolutely – they are creatures of habit.

Q. Why do cows moo?

A. That's how they communicate to each other.

Q. How much food does a dairy cow eat each day?

A. About 100 pounds. Half of this ends up coming out the other end, so we have a great supply of fertilizer too!

Did you know that just like your fingerprints and snowflakes, no two Holstein cows have the same spots?