

A year on a dairy farm

The dairy farm is a dynamic place, with a range of daily and seasonal tasks that must be completed.

Central to the success of the business are the dairy cows – their health and welfare is paramount. Farmers make use of a range of sophisticated technology to help the farm run efficiently.

Some farmers use IT systems to monitor individual cow movement and milk yield, robotic milking systems, satellite controlled tractors and finance management.

A typical day in the life of a dairy farmer

- 5:45am** The cows are gathered for milking. The cows are used to routine and very often are ready at the gate for the farmer.
- 6:00am** The cows are milked in the parlour. Some farms use IT to monitor how much each cow produces. Calves are fed some of the warm milk.
- 7:30am** The milking parlour is cleaned after milking. Very hot water and detergent is used to clean every part.
- 8:00am** The cows are fed. Even when the cows are grazing, some feed is also provided to vary their diet.
- 9:00am** The tanker calls at a regular time to collect the milk. A computerised form is printed showing the amount of milk taken.
- 9:30am** Routine checks are made to ensure that the cows are healthy. A vet may be asked to visit at this time.
- 10:30am** Cows are put out to graze if the weather is good.
- 12:00pm** Office work and/or general maintenance around the farm is completed. In addition, some farmers will be out in the fields tending crops.
- 4:00pm** The cows are brought in for their second milking.
- 6:00pm** The cows are fed and made safe. In the spring and summer, for the majority this will be in the fields and in the autumn and winter, this will be indoors.
- 8:00pm** The farmer checks that all the cows are settled for the night. This is also an opportunity for the farmer to check on any cows that might be calving.

Did you know?

Throughout the year, the farmer looks for opportunities to maintain and enhance the countryside. Most hedges are cut every 2-3 years to help wildlife and birds flourish. The farmer also leaves a grassy strip at the edge of fields to make a wildlife corridor; they may also plant more trees and look after any ponds on the farm.



WINTER
JANUARY

FEBRUARY

MARCH

SPRING
APRIL

MAY

DECEMBER



NOVEMBER

OCTOBER
AUTUMN

SEPTEMBER

AUGUST

JULY
SUMMER



Did you know?
Cows like to lie down for up to 14 hours a day, so their beds need to be comfortable.

The cows are inside, protected from the cold and bad weather. They can freely move around, socialise and feed.

Much of the time is spent milking, feeding, cleaning the housing (scraping away slurry) and putting out fresh bedding for the cows.

Work continues on keeping the building and machinery in good order.

As the days get colder the cows come inside, at first only at night, but gradually they are housed during the day.

Winter feeding begins. The farmer feeds the cows with fodder crops and other nutritious feed.

Hedges are cut, after birds have finished nesting. The farmer spreads slurry on the arable land – this is an excellent source of nutrients and reduces the need for chemical fertilisers. Crops are also sown for the next year.



The cows start to go to the fields to graze, depending on the weather. The ground needs to be dry so it does not become churned up. The grass also needs to be growing well.

The farmer checks all the fencing and that the water tanks are clean and working.

The fields, gateways, fences and hedgerows are maintained.

Some farmers plant maize and other crops for winter feed for their cows. Many tractors use satellite technology to improve accuracy.

Did you know?
Cows have animal nutritionists to plan special diets for them.



The majority of cows are outside all day, except from milking time and during bad weather. The farmer can use this time to make repairs on buildings while the cows are out.

The farmer makes silage by cutting long grass and storing it in a big clamp or pit. This is covered and over the summer breaks down – this is called ensiling. It becomes an important source of food for the cows in the winter.

In late summer wheat is harvested and straw is baled – this is kept for feeding and bedding in the winter.



Did you know?
Dairy cows all have unique passports.

