

Ever wondered
what it is
like to be a
dairy farmer?



seasons a year long seasonal calendar of farming activities

Spring: March 21 - June 20

THE FIELDS ARE PREPARED FOR PLANTING CROPS

Cows play a key role in nutrient recycling. They eat plants, and their manure is spread back on the fields to fertilize the soil so that farmers can grow crops to feed their cows again.

Summer: June 21 - September 20

GROWING CROPS

Grass, clover and alfalfa are usually harvested every 30 to 40 days. The land is fertilized after each crop, and in drier regions, it needs to be watered twice between crop rotations.

Fall: September 21 - December 20

HARVESTING AND MAINTENANCE

Annual crops are harvested in the fall. At this stage of growth crops provide the best feed for dairy cows. Crops are then planted to protect the soil over the winter months.

Winter: December 21 - March 20

PLANNING

Winter months are used to plan for next year's growing season by reviewing the previous year's crop successes and challenges, and updating equipment and supplies.



a day in the life of a
dairy farmer



for more information call BC Milk Producers at 604.294.3737
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imagine waking up one morning as a dairy farmer what would your day be like?



5am: Rise and Shine!

- Cows need to be milked, fed and looked after in order to remain healthy, highly productive animals.
- Young calves (1-3 months old) are individually fed warm milk from their mothers.
- Older calves are fed hay, grain and water.

9am: Chores to be done

- Alleys in the barn are cleaned continuously by automatic scrapers, while stalls are scraped and cleaned at least twice a day.
- Farmers need to keep records of everything that happens on their farm, such as what a cow eats, veterinarian visits, as well as other purchases and schedules.



Noon: Lunch time followed by more chores

- Most farms grow their own feed, such as hay and grains, so there is much field work that needs to be done in-between milking times.

3pm: Mix daily ration for the next day

- Hay is mixed with grains, silage, protein supplements and vitamins and minerals to make a "total mixed ration" (TMR) for the cows.
- This ration contains all the nutrients that cows need to produce high quality, nutritious milk.

5pm: Cow milking and 2nd feeding

- Cows are milked in bright, well ventilated rooms called milking parlours.
- In the parlour, the milking equipment is sanitized and the farmer cleans the cow's teats before gently placing the milking machine on them. It usually takes 5 - 8 minutes to milk each cow.
- Once the cow has been milked she returns to the barn to eat, walk around, socialize and rest.

9pm: Bedtime

- Farmers observe calving cows and assist them as needed. Cows can give birth any time, so during some nights sleep can be interrupted.



fast facts:

Dairy farmers work **long hours** and days off are rare.

On any dairy farm, there are cows to milk **365 days of the year**, including Christmas day, weekends, and public holidays.

Dairy farming involves a **broad range of skills** from good business and financial skills to caring for animals to working with machinery and growing and harvesting crops.

Approximately 95% of all farms in BC are **family owned and run**.

The average dairy farm in BC has **120 milking cows**.

