

FUN FACES OF WISCONSIN AGRICULTURE CURLEY'S BEEF FAST FACTS (8/2011)



Production Information

Beef animals are raised on farms and ranches. There are almost 100 million beef animals and 800,000 beef cattle producers in the United States. Most of the cattle are raised on family farms.

Cow-calf operations will have a herd of breeding cows that are bred by either a bull or with artificial insemination. The gestation for beef cattle is 283 days or about 9 months. A heifer can be bred so that she has her first calf at 24 months of age. The calves produced are kept until after weaning and then sold to another type of producer until market weight. These may be stockers who keep the cattle until they are ready to go to a feedlot. Feedlots will raise the animals until market weight and then sell them to a packing plant. Cattle can reach maturity and market weight by 18-22 months or when they are between 1000 – 1250 pounds. This will vary on the breed of cattle, feeding conditions and other factors. There are over 275 recognized breeds of beef cattle.

Cattle are ruminant animals and have four compartments in their stomachs. This stomach system allows them to eat grass and roughages as they will swallow the food, cough it back up and chew it as “cud”, and then swallow it again and finish digesting it. A cow may chew its cud for up to eight hours a day. Beef can eat up to 40 pounds of feed per day including corn, alfalfa, silage and by-products such as cotton seed hull and corn stalks.

Wisconsin Production

In 2010, Wisconsin had 3.4 million cattle and calves. Cattle and calves generate \$726 million in economic activity in Wisconsin. The counties with the most cattle were Grant, Marathon, Clark, Dane and Fond du Lac. Cattle rank as the #3 commodity by dollar value in the state. There are 260,000 beef cows in the state. The calf crop for 2010 was 1,370,000 animals. Wisconsin ranks #9 in the nation for cattle and calves. Wisconsin is host to the World Beef Expo held in West Allis in September.

Career Information

Producers will raise the cattle and care for their dietary, housing and physical needs. Nutritionists will develop balanced rations for the cattle. Animal scientists will work with animal genetics, breeding and artificial insemination. Meat inspectors and processors will make sure that beef is properly handled, inspected and labeled for the consumer. Other jobs include animal housing (buildings and feedlots), and cattle fitting (preparing animals for shows).

Trivia

- Cattle produce about 25 billion pounds of meat each year.
- The combined value of the cattle and beef industry is \$200 billion.
- The hide from one cow can make 144 baseballs, 20 footballs or 12 basketballs.
- Disneyland (CA) sells over 4 million hamburgers each year.

Other Information

Cow- adult female that has produced a calf

Bull- male animal

Steer- male animal that has been castrated and cannot breed

Heifer- young female that has not produced a calf

Veal- calves that are raised to 475-500 pounds

Over 98% of the beef animal is used when it is processed. About 45% of the animal is used for meat and the rest is used for other by-products including leather, china, glue, film, soap, pharmaceuticals, insulin, gelatins.

The meat from cattle is called beef. The average American eats about 65 pounds of beef each year.