



**ANIMAL CARE AND WELL-BEING  
FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS:**

## **BEEF CATTLE**



**Q. Why are beef cattle so big compared to dairy cows?**

**A.** Beef cattle are raised for their meat, while dairy cows are not. Farmers feed beef cattle to reach a *market weight* of about 1,200 to 1,400 pounds. They need a lot of muscle and fat to grow that big!

**Q. Why are there fans and misters in the beef barn?**

**A.** Beef cattle can develop *heat stress* in hot, humid weather, which causes them to eat and drink less. Farmers put fans and misters in barns to help keep cattle cool, comfortable and healthy.

**Q. How much space do beef cattle need?**

**A.** Beef cattle need enough space to stand and lie down comfortably. During the day, fair exhibitors will exercise their animals so they can stretch their legs.

**Q. Do cattle like to be around other cattle?**

**A.** Yes, cattle like to hang out with each other because they're very social, herd animals! If cattle can't see, hear, smell or touch other cattle, it is stressful to them.

**Q. Is it normal for cattle to be this quiet?**

**A.** A lot of *vocalization* or *mooring* means cattle are stressed or afraid. If the barns are quiet, it means the cattle are comfortable in their surroundings.



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**Q. What is that stick that is used with beef cattle?**

**A.** The helpful tool is called a *show stick*. Handlers use it as an arm extension to assist with placing an animal's feet in a comfortable stance. They also use it to scratch cattle in the ring to keep them relaxed.

**Q. Do you milk these cattle?**

**A.** No. These are beef cattle not dairy cows. Beef cattle have heavy muscling and a good amount of fat coverage. We get milk from dairy cows, which have much less muscling and fat coverage, and much larger udders.

**Q. Why are the cattle chewing gum?**

**A.** They're not really chewing gum, they're *chewing their cud* – or in scientific terms, *ruminating*. Cattle, sheep, goats and camels are *ruminant animals*. That means the animal has a four-chambered stomach and can digest feed that a single-chambered human stomach can't handle. The *cud* is food that is belched up from the first stomach chamber. Chewing the food again grinds it into very small pieces that are more easily digested in the next stomach chamber, the *rumen*.

**Q. Why do you wash your beef cattle?**

**A.** In the show ring, an animal's hair coat will reflect proper care, nutrition, and grooming. Making sure the animal is receiving a well-balanced diet and adequate water is an important part of providing excellent care for cattle. This excellent care will show in the coat after proper washing. The washing also helps keep the animal clean and cool in the warm weather.

**Q. How can you tell when cattle are sick?**

**A.** Farmers carefully watch their cattle's normal behavior, so they can often tell when an animal isn't feeling well just by the way it's acting. Sick cattle eat and drink less and rest a lot more than usual. They may also have a fever or show other symptoms. If farmers recognize any of these signs of illness, they can take appropriate action to help the animal get better.



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