



ANIMAL CARE AND WELL-BEING FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS:

DAIRY CATTLE



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

A. Healthy dairy cows have less musculing and body fat and look skinnier than beef cattle. Dairy cows that are too heavy may have trouble giving birth and might develop health problems.

Q. Do cows like to be around other cows?

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

Q. Why do the cows have tags in their ears?

A. Every cow has an identification number printed on her ear tag. Farmers use the number to find a cow quickly and to track things like how much milk she gives, how much to feed her and when her next calf is due.

Q. Does milking a cow hurt her?

A. When done properly, milking doesn't hurt the cow, it actually makes her feel better. When her udder is full of milk, she may be carrying around as much as 70 extra pounds! Milking takes away the extra weight so she's more comfortable. The bonus is that milking gives humans a healthy, wholesome food.

Q. Why do cows lie down so much?

A. When cows are comfortable and relaxed, they lie down for about 12 hours a day. Lying down helps them to digest their food and produce milk.



ANIMAL CARE AND WELL-BEING FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS:

HORSE



Q. Why do riders use crops or whips?

A. Crops and whips are aids that provide the rider an extension of his or her hand. Riders don't use them often but when they do, they use them to encourage horses to go forward, or in some cases, to go faster.

Q. Why do riders use spurs?

A. Spurs provide an extension to the rider's leg. Riders use them most often to encourage a horse to go forward. Some horses have also been taught to slow down or stop when spurs are used.

Q. Do shoes and bits hurt?

A. Properly applied shoes do not hurt and actually protect the horses' feet from bruising or excessive wear. Horseshoes are nailed into the horse's hoof wall, which is much like a human fingernail. Your nails don't hurt when you cut them if you do it correctly. Riders use bits to communicate with horses and to guide them. Properly fitted bits typically do not hurt the horse unless the rider pulls excessively or with poor timing.

Q. Do horses bite?

A. Horses sometimes bite accidentally, because they can't see things placed directly below their mouth, and can't distinguish between fingers and carrots. Less often, horses will bite in an effort to defend themselves from predators.



ANIMAL CARE AND WELL-BEING FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS:

GENERAL ANIMAL WELL-BEING

Q. What is animal well-being?

A. *Animal well-being*, or *animal welfare*, refers to an animal's condition or the treatment it receives. When a person protects an animal's well-being, he or she makes sure to meet both its physical and mental needs. *Animal care*, *animal husbandry* and *humane treatment* are other terms used when people discuss the condition and treatment of animals.

Q. Why is protecting an animal's well-being important?

A. It's the right thing to do. Animals that have good welfare are healthier. It also makes good business sense because farmers who take good care of their animals produce a better quality product.

Q. Should I wash my hands after I touch an animal?

A. Absolutely! Many animals carry germs that can be spread to people. Washing your hands is the best way to keep those germs from spreading to keep both animals and people healthy.

Q. Can animals be happy or sad?

A. Animals have the basic emotions of seeking, rage, fear, panic, lust, care and play. Animals react when their needs are met or not met. When they react, they can seem happy or sad to us. For example, when an animal's play emotion is met, it looks happy to us (Grandin & Johnson, 2010).

Q. How do you know if an animal is comfortable?

A. Animal caretakers can tell based on what they know about how that species normally acts. Caretakers must meet not only the animal's physical needs but its mental needs as well. For example as with most animals, cats want a soft, comfortable space to rest to meet their physical needs. That spot must also meet their mental needs. It should be a raised surface so the cat can have a higher point to watch its surroundings or be partially covered to allow for a hiding space. When animals begin to behave in a way that is not normal for their species, animal caretakers make changes to the animals' surroundings so that their behavior becomes normal.

Q. Do all animals need the same things?

A. Yes and no. All animals require Brambell's Five Freedoms: 1) freedom from hunger and thirst; 2) freedom from discomfort; 3) freedom from pain, injury or disease; 4) freedom to express natural behaviors and 5) freedom from fear and distress. The way those freedoms are met for each species can differ. For example, although ducks and chickens are both poultry, ducks need a pool of water to express their natural behavior, but chickens don't (Brambell, 1965).



Q. How do you know how to take care of an animal?

A. 4-H members learn how to take proper care of their animals through 4-H. Bringing an animal to the fair is part of the learning experience. 4-H'ers learn to show animals and present them to the judge, who will ask questions regarding the animals' care.

Q. How do you decide what is good animal well-being?

A. A person can assess the animal's situation by using Brambell's Five Freedoms to ask the following questions: 1) Does the animal have food and water? 2) Is the animal free from discomfort? 3) Is the animal free from pain, injury or disease? 4) Is the animal free to express its natural behavior? and 5) Is the animal free from fear and distress? Animal well-being is a continuum, meaning it can range



from very good to very poor and be anywhere along the imaginary line.

Q. Do these animals at the fair have good well-being?

A. Yes, in fact, fairs are a way to show animals with good well-being. However, fairs can be stressful environments for the animals. They are not used to the noises and number of people that come through the barns to learn about them. When you as a fair goer treat them with respect, it helps us with their good well-being and gives us a chance to teach you about them.

Q. Whom do I talk to if I'm concerned about an animal's care or well-being?

A. If you are concerned about an animal here at the fair, find the barn manager and speak to him or her about your concerns. If you are concerned about the well-being of an animal outside of the fair, try speaking with the animal owner or caretaker first. There might be a good reason why an animal is housed or cared for in a certain way. People house and care for animals in many ways, some that may be different from what you might do. There are many methods to properly care for an animal. If after speaking with the owner or caretaker you still have concerns, speak with another adult you trust to assess the situation to see if other authorities should be contacted.

REFERENCES

Brambell, J. R. (Chairman). (1965). *Report of the technical committee to enquire into the welfare of animals kept under intensive livestock systems*. (Command Paper 2896). London: HMSO.

Grandin, T., & Johnson, C. (2010). *Animals make us human: Creating the best life for animals*. New York: Mariner Books.



MSU is an affirmative-action, equal-opportunity employer, committed to achieving excellence through a diverse workforce and inclusive culture that encourages all people to reach their full potential. Michigan State University Extension programs and materials are open to all without regard to race, color, national origin, gender, gender identity, religion, age, height, weight, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, marital status, family status or veteran status. Issued in furtherance of MSU Extension work, acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Ray Hammerschmidt, Interim Director, MSU Extension, East Lansing, MI 48824. This information is for educational purposes only. Reference to commercial products or trade names does not imply endorsement by MSU Extension or bias against those not mentioned. The 4-H Name and Emblem have special protections from Congress, protected by code 18 USC 707. 1P-6K-4:2015-BP-RM, PA/MR



Q. Why do some horses wear blankets?

A. Horses wear sheets or blankets at horse shows most often to keep their hair coats clean. Handlers must take care to make sure that horses don't get too hot or sweat under the sheet or blanket.

Q. Why does that horse have a collar?

A. Some horses have a bad habit called *cribbing*. The horse will set its teeth on an object such as a fence and suck in air. This behavior can wear down the teeth or sometimes cause other negative issues. Some horses wear a collar, or a *crib strap*, to prevent them from cribbing. The collar does not hurt or change how a horse breathes, but simply prevents it from being able to suck in the air.

Q. Can I feed fair food to the horse?

A. No. The horse's digestive tract is sensitive to changes and unusual foods. Feeding them fair food could make them sick. You should never feed a horse anything without asking the owner's permission.

Q. Why does the horse have a blindfold?

A. What looks like a blindfold is actually a *fly mask* made with small holes that the horse can see through. A fly mask protects the horse's eyes and face from flies or other biting insects.

Q. Does that horse with the bandages have a broken leg?

A. No. What appear to be bandages are actually *leg wraps*. Leg wraps protect the legs from cuts and scrapes, provide support, keep the legs clean or sometimes protect cuts from getting dirty. A horse wearing leg wraps is not injured.

Q. Why are the horses in stalls most of the day?

A. When horses are at shows, exhibitions or fairs, you'll often see them in stalls when not being ridden or shown. This keeps them safe and gives them a chance to rest from their work. While at home, horses are housed in a variety of situations. They may be in stalls part of the time and spend part of the time turned out to the field or pasture.



MSU is an affirmative-action, equal-opportunity employer, committed to achieving excellence through a diverse workforce and inclusive culture that encourages all people to reach their full potential. Michigan State University Extension programs and materials are open to all without regard to race, color, national origin, gender, gender identity, religion, age, height, weight, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, marital status, family status or veteran status. Issued in furtherance of MSU Extension work, acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Ray Hammerschmidt, Interim Director, MSU Extension, East Lansing, MI 48824. This information is for educational purposes only. Reference to commercial products or trade names does not imply endorsement by MSU Extension or bias against those not mentioned. The 4-H Name and Emblem have special protections from Congress, protected by code 18 USC 707. 1P-6K-4:2015-BP-RM, PA/MR



Q. Why are the cows lying on piles of straw?

A. Just like people, cows want comfortable beds. The thick layer of straw bedding used at fairs and shows gives the cows a comfortable cushion to stand and rest on. Straw is also easy for exhibitors to move and clean.

Q. Why are the cows chewing gum?

A. They're not really chewing gum, they're *chewing their cud* - or in scientific terms, *ruminating*. Cows, 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. A cow's *cud* is food it has belched up from her 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. How can you tell when a cow is sick?

A. Farmers carefully watch their cattle's normal behavior, so they can often tell when a cow isn't feeling well just by the way she's acting. Sick cows 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 cow get better.

Q. Why won't cows walk through puddles?

A. Cows see the world very differently than humans do. They have poor depth perception, which means they can't easily tell how deep a shiny puddle is. Contrasting colors, like white lines on dark concrete, also make it hard for a cow to tell if she's walking on stable ground or about to fall in a hole.

Q. Why are there fans in the cow barn?

A. Cows develop heat stress in hot, humid weather, which causes them to eat and drink less and produce less milk than usual. So we put fans in cow barns to help keep them cool, comfortable and healthy.



MSU is an affirmative-action, equal-opportunity employer, committed to achieving excellence through a diverse workforce and inclusive culture that encourages all people to reach their full potential. Michigan State University Extension programs and materials are open to all without regard to race, color, national origin, gender, gender identity, religion, age, height, weight, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, marital status, family status or veteran status. Issued in furtherance of MSU Extension work, acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Ray Hammerschmidt, Interim Director, MSU Extension, East Lansing, MI 48824. This information is for educational purposes only. Reference to commercial products or trade names does not imply endorsement by MSU Extension or bias against those not mentioned. The 4-H Name and Emblem have special protections from Congress, protected by code 18 USC 707. 1P-6K-4:2015-BP-RM, PA/MR



ANIMAL CARE AND WELL-BEING FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS:

SWINE



Q. Why do hogs' ears look ruffled?

A. What look like ruffles are actually *ear notches*. Notches in the hog's right ear identify the litter it belongs to. Notches in the left ear give the hog a unique individual number. Ear notches allow the farmer to record treatment and other important information about each particular hog as it moves about the farm. Ear notching should be done when a hog is between 1 and 4 days old.

Q. Do hogs bite?

A. Yes, hogs will bite. Biting behavior in a hog depends upon the hog's experiences. Generally, a hog will bite when frightened. However, a hog may bite out of frustration or because of a bad experience in the past.

Q. Why do some hogs have a curly tail and some almost no tail?

A. Some farmers choose to remove, or *dock*, their hogs' tails during the first week of life. Docking prevents hogs from biting each other's tails. It is hard to know if or when tail biting will begin, and if it does, how often it will occur. If a hog has a bitten tail, it can be painful because the tail, and sometimes the spine, can become infected.

Q. Why are there scratches on the hog?

A. Hogs like to scratch and rub on things. They also like to root and play with other hogs. The breeds that have lighter skin show the scratches from these natural behaviors more than others do. This is not a sign of abuse or neglect.



ANIMAL CARE AND WELL-BEING FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS:

SHEEP



Q. Why are the sheep chewing gum?

A. They're not really chewing gum, they're *chewing their cud* – or in scientific terms, *ruminating*. Sheep, cattle, 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. A sheep's *cud* is food it has 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 are there more than one sheep in one pen?

A. Sheep like to hang out with each other in a pen because they're very social, herd animals! If sheep can't see, hear, smell or touch other sheep is stressful to them.

Q. Do sheep have tails?

A. Sheep are born with tails, but they are often removed, or *docked*, when they are young to keep them healthy. Manure and urine can collect in the wool by their tails. This dirty area can attract flies, which burrow in the sheep's skin and lay eggs there. This creates a painful illness called *fly strike*, which can kill sheep. Docking the tails keeps manure from collecting and protects the sheep from getting fly strike.

Q. How can you tell if a sheep is sick?

A. Farmers carefully watch their sheep's normal behavior, so they can often tell when an animal isn't feeling well just by the way it's acting. Sick sheep 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 sheep get better.



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.



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 utters.

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.



MSU is an affirmative-action, equal-opportunity employer, committed to achieving excellence through a diverse workforce and inclusive culture that encourages all people to reach their full potential. Michigan State University Extension programs and materials are open to all without regard to race, color, national origin, gender, gender identity, religion, age, height, weight, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, marital status, family status or veteran status. Issued in furtherance of MSU Extension work, acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Ray Hammerschmidt, Interim Director, MSU Extension, East Lansing, MI 48824. This information is for educational purposes only. Reference to commercial products or trade names does not imply endorsement by MSU Extension or bias against those not mentioned. The 4-H Name and Emblem have special protections from Congress, protected by code 18 USC 707. 1P-6K-4:2015-BP-RM, PA/MR



Q. What are the tags in the sheep ears?

A. Every sheep has an identification number printed on its ear tag. Farmers use the number to find a sheep quickly. If there is a disease outbreak, veterinarians can use these tags to track sick animals.

Q. Do sheep always make this much noise?

A. Sheep are quite vocal. They use different sounds to communicate with other sheep. Because sheep are social animals, they may become fearful when alone in the pen if they don't see other sheep. If a sheep can hear another sheep, then it will know it's not alone. Sheep also warn other sheep of any danger, and ewes, or mother sheep, call to their lambs.

Q. Does it hurt your sheep when you hold on to its head and neck when you show it?

A. Applying gentle pressure on the sheep's neck and behind the head is called *bracing*. To the sheep, it feels as if it's wearing a halter. It does not hurt the sheep if done correctly. If the sheep moves away or begins to cough, the handler should release pressure and try again to make sure the sheep is comfortable. Positioning a sheep in this way shows off its muscling and design to the judge.

Q. Do the sheep with wool feel hot?

A. No. Wool is an amazing fiber! It helps to insulate and keep sheep warm and dry in the winter, and cool in the summer because it holds air in between all the individual fibers.

Q. Does it hurt sheep when their wool is cut off?

A. No. Cutting the wool of sheep, or *shearing* them, does not hurt them. Shearing is similar to when you get a haircut – you don't feel anything! Shearing sheep is a learned skilled that takes a lot of patience and practice. A sheep may be sheared in a stand with its head held in a similar position to the *brace* or while it's being held on the ground.

Q. Why do the sheep wear coats?

A. The coats or blankets help keep the sheep clean while they are at the fair. This reduces the time that the handlers need to groom them before showing. Both *meat breeds*, sheep that will be used primarily as food, and *wool breeds*, sheep used primarily to produce fiber, can wear coats or blankets to reduce the amount of dirt, manure and feed on their fleece. Young animals that do not have long wool may also wear coats or blankets during the winter to keep warm.



MSU is an affirmative-action, equal-opportunity employer, committed to achieving excellence through a diverse workforce and inclusive culture that encourages all people to reach their full potential. Michigan State University Extension programs and materials are open to all without regard to race, color, national origin, gender, gender identity, religion, age, height, weight, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, marital status, family status or veteran status. Issued in furtherance of MSU Extension work, acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Ray Hammerschmidt, Interim Director, MSU Extension, East Lansing, MI 48824. This information is for educational purposes only. Reference to commercial products or trade names does not imply endorsement by MSU Extension or bias against those not mentioned. The 4-H Name and Emblem have special protections from Congress, protected by code 18 USC 707. 1P-6K-4:2015-BP-RM, PA/MR



Q. Do hogs always make this much noise?

A. Hogs have a lot to say, especially to other hogs. If you listen, you will hear different sounds and tones in the noises they make. These different noises all have meanings to other hogs.

Q. Why are canes or whips used with the hogs?

A. Touch is the best way to communicate to hogs where to move. Hogs are the only class of large animals that exhibitors are not allowed to lead into the ring with a halter and rope. Instead, they must teach hogs to respond to commands using a cane or whip. For example, the hog may learn that a tap on the side of the head means to turn in a specific direction. An exhibitor uses the cane or whip to touch the animal firmly enough to make it move, but not so hard that it hurts. Some exhibitors use one firm tap and some use many light taps to direct their animals. Hogs are very smart and learn quickly when properly trained.

Q. Why are the hogs rolling around on the wet concrete?

A. Barns are built to keep hogs cool. On a hot day, sometimes the hogs like to roll in the water for extra cooling like you might jump in a swimming pool or play in a sprinkler.

Q. Why are some hogs penned alone and others are together?

A. The hogs in pens with others have lived together before, so they are already familiar with one another. Hogs are able to recognize other hogs and if they are not familiar with each other, they may fight to establish a social order.

Q. Why are the hogs different colors?

A. There are many different breeds of hogs, just as there are different breeds of dogs, cats and other animals. The color of the hog can help you tell what breed it is. You can also tell the breed by looking at the ears. Some breeds have ears that are down, while others have ears that stand up.

Q. How can you tell if your hog is sick?

A. Farmers carefully watch their hogs' normal behavior, so they can often tell when a hog isn't feeling well just by the way it's acting. Sick hogs 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 hog get better.



MSU is an affirmative-action, equal-opportunity employer, committed to achieving excellence through a diverse workforce and inclusive culture that encourages all people to reach their full potential. Michigan State University Extension programs and materials are open to all without regard to race, color, national origin, gender, gender identity, religion, age, height, weight, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, marital status, family status or veteran status. Issued in furtherance of MSU Extension work, acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Ray Hammerschmidt, Interim Director, MSU Extension, East Lansing, MI 48824. This information is for educational purposes only. Reference to commercial products or trade names does not imply endorsement by MSU Extension or bias against those not mentioned. The 4-H Name and Emblem have special protections from Congress, protected by code 18 USC 707. 1P-6K-4:2015-BP-RM, PA/MR