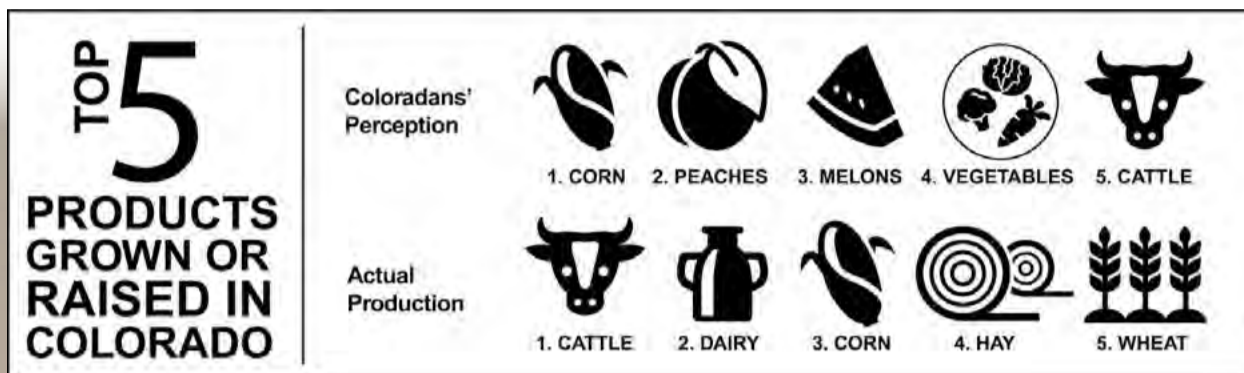


Cattle in Colorado

Did you know that agriculture is the 2nd largest industry in Colorado? Tourism is #1 because lots of people like to visit our great state and spend money on hotels, food and activities. But agriculture is here every day as part of our state and our livelihood.

On a sheet of paper, write what you think are the top five agricultural products raised in Colorado.

Now look at the graphic below. Were the items you listed part of the top five in actual production?



Most consumers don't think about the segments of agriculture available in Colorado. The segments of agriculture they do think about do the most advertising, are seen in the grocery store or as you drive past farms or at a Farmers Market.

When we break down the parts of agriculture in Colorado, cattle and dairy compose the largest portion. Colorado's Top 5 Farm and Ranch Products for 2015 (most current data)

| # | Commodity | Cash receipts in millions |
|----|-------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. | Cattle and Calves | 4,040 |
| 2. | Dairy Products | 664 |
| 3. | Corn, Grain | 498 |
| 4. | Hay | 398 |
| 5. | Wheat | 359 |

Cattle – cattle is king in Colorado, representing the largest segment of agriculture and contributing nearly \$4 billion in annual cash receipts. Our varied landscape, warm summer days and cool nights give our livestock an abundance of grazing and feed options. Colorado cattle have access to millions of acres of grazing land across the state. With more than 300 days of sunshine, Colorado has a mild climate benefiting our cattle feeding industry. Plus, we have innovative and state-of-the-art processing facilities, ensuring our beef is safe to eat and delicious to taste.

Dairy – Colorado dairy products nourish families, communities and our state. Dairy farms produce nearly three billion pounds of milk, contributing more than half a billion dollars in annual cash receipts. Thanks to agricultural innovation, dairy cows do best in temperatures between 40 and 60 degrees Fahrenheit. Colorado's annual average temperatures are between 50 and 60 degrees Fahrenheit making our climate a perfect environment for raising dairy cattle.

Cattle Vocabulary

Cattle and calves include all ages and types of bovine animals.

Definitions:

- Cattle are known as bovines.
- Cows are mature female cattle who have had at least one calf.
- Bulls are male cattle.
- Steer is a neutered male bovine.
- Red Angus, Holstein, Charolais, Hereford and Angus are names of some of the numerous beef cattle breeds.
- Calf is a young male or female bovine.
- Heifer is a young female bovine that has not yet had a calf.



Red Angus bull



Hereford heifer



Holstein cow



Charolais calf



Angus steer

Two Types - Beef & Dairy Cattle

Cattle come in many different shapes and sizes. There are over 200 breeds of cattle. Some are suited to different climates or are used for different purposes. We will start here - beef cattle vs dairy cattle.

Beef cattle have been bred to have more muscle and are more “square” in appearance. They have muscling over both their shoulders and hips. Beef cattle are more rugged because they spend most of their lives on their own out in a pasture, climbing mountains to graze and living with the wildlife. A beef cow has a small udder and only produces one to two gallons of milk a day, enough for her baby calf to grow up and be healthy and strong.

Dairy cattle have a more angular look with less overall muscle. Even though dairy cattle look like they are too thin, they aren't; they are bred to produce milk, not meat. Dairy cattle have been selectively bred to produce more milk than one calf would need. Because dairy cattle live in sheltered areas near a barn, they do not need to have as much fat on their bodies. They use the nutrition provided by the feed they are given and turn it into milk. A dairy cow udder is much larger and they can produce up to 10 gallons of milk a day.

While there are various physical differences, beef cows and dairy cows have one thing in common: they all provide high quality, nourishing beef and milk that can be part of a healthy diet.

Click on the links below to learn more.

POPULAR BEEF BREEDS OF CATTLE

All these beef breeds of cattle can be found in Colorado. There are some breeds that do not do well in Colorado because they have thin skins and are better suited to warmer climates. Those breeds are the ones with the humps that you see in pictures of Africa, Texas or at a rodeo. They also don't have as much hair as the breeds that live in Colorado.



ANGUS

Angus is one of the most recognized cattle breeds, characterized by their black hides. They are popular with farmers and ranchers because they are good mothers and are very good at converting their feed into high-quality meat.



CHAROLAIS

Charolais cattle, (pronounced “char-lay”) originated in France and were brought to the U.S. in the mid-1930s. Charolais are generally white or creamy white in color. Charolais cattle can withstand cold temperatures relatively well and they are more heat tolerant than darker hided breeds.



HEREFORD

The Hereford breed, (pronounced “her-furd”) was developed in England nearly 250 years ago by farmers who needed cattle that were good at converting native grass into lean muscle. They are generally a reddish-brown color with white markings, especially on their face.



SIMMENTAL

The Simmental cattle breed is one with multiple color variations – there are both red and black Simmentals. They were introduced to the United States from Switzerland in the late 19th century because of their docility and mothering abilities.



RED ANGUS

Yep, you read right. There are red Angus cattle! Although they are not raised as widely as black Angus, the beef Red Angus cattle provide offers similar marbling and flavor. These cattle are more heat tolerant than their black-hided relatives and are a docile cattle breed with good mothering traits.



POPULAR BREEDS OF DAIRY CATTLE



HOLSTEINS

Holsteins came to the United States from Holland in 1621. They are black and white. They weigh 1,500 pounds when mature. They produce the most milk on average.



JERSEYS

Jerseys came to the United States from the Isle of Jersey, another of the islands in the English Channel. They are fawn in color and may have white markings. They weigh 900 pounds when mature. They are the smallest of the dairy breeds but produce milk with the highest protein and fat content.



BROWN SWISS

Brown Swiss came to the United States from Switzerland in 1869. They are solid brown varying from very light to dark. They weigh 1,500 pounds when mature.

Why do cows eat grass?

Cows are a ruminant animal. That means they have four parts to their stomach. Because they can move the grass from one compartment to another they can digest grass. They take a bite of grass, chew it a little and send it to their first compartment. It is then moved from there back to chewing. This process of swallowing, "un-swallowing", re-chewing, and re-swallowing is called "rumination," or more commonly, "chewing the cud." Rumination enables cows to chew grass more completely, which improves digestion.

If you or I ate grass with our single stomach it would pass through our system with very little nutrition gathered by our body. The cow's stomach compartments continue to break down the grass with good bacteria in the stomach and allow the cow to absorb the nutrients.

Total Mix Ration

As humans it is recommended that we eat a variety of food every day to get all the nutrients we need to maintain a healthy body and lifestyle. A general nutrition guide and recommendation for US Americans provided by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) is MyPlate.

Just like humans have the recommendations of MyPlate, cows have nutrient requirements. Based on recommendations from their nutritionists, dairy farmers and beef feedlots mix the different feeds together creating a total mix ration or TMR. Total Mix Ration is a method of feeding cows that combines all forages, grains, protein feeds, minerals, vitamins and feed additives formulated to a specified nutrient concentration into a single feed mix. In human terms, it is like a salad.



Meet the Cattle Kids

Josie & Madi Bunkelman

Hi, I'm Josie Bunkelman, I'm 11! I'm Madi Bunkelman and I'm 13! We are members of the Loma Stars 4-H Club. We live on 5 acres in Western Colorado. Our family has recently become active in cattle in Colorado. Dad grew up on a dairy farm in Wisconsin, Mom grew up on a horse ranch in Colorado, they have some knowledge of agriculture and are very helpful with our projects. As adults our parents' primary source of income isn't directly related to agriculture, but oil and gas. That doesn't mean we don't have a significant contribution to make to the land we live on and the plates of America!

As young girls we were both very interested in the few cow/calf pairs that our parents kept on our small acreage. When you are small on space, you learn to be very careful with your resources. We learned about rotational grazing and sacrifice areas in the pasture. We helped with the calves and care of the mother cows. It's important to select a proper ration for the pairs so the mother cows can support calves.

When we were old enough to begin showing in 4-H we acquired calves and began campaigning for the beef industry! As young showman, we learned it was important to understand we are promoting beef animals. Our goal is to put delicious and healthy food on tables. We get to start with a weanling, teach them to lead and show them all over the state. the most fun we have working that hard! Marketing our projects to the community by inviting individuals and businesses to the county fair and the Junior Livestock Sale is another educational function of 4-H and livestock projects.

We are very fortunate that in our community we have active and committed groups of Cattlemen and Cattlewomen to help young producers like ourselves. The Mesa County Cattlewomen host a Beef Field Day in the spring and offer Beef Quality Assurance (BQA) learning sessions throughout the year. The Cattlemen sponsor a Catch a Heifer program that allows participants to earn their heifer at the end of two years by selecting, showing, breeding and hopefully producing a calf. Resulting in a herd of our own!

One day we both would like to have land and herds of our own to care for!

Awna Hirsch



Hello my name is Awna Hirsch and I am 16 years old. I have lived on my family's dairy farm my whole life. I am so thankful to live on a dairy farm. These animals mean so much to me. I enjoy caring for and spending time with my animals. My favorite part of raising animals is to see them grow up and become the wonderful gentle giants that they are. I have also learned a lot about insuring the health of our animals. Through a natural curiosity and by working with our dairy veterinarians I have learned about the proper nutrition and diet of dairy cattle and I have also dug deeper to learn about cattle genetics and reproduction.

I am a member of Severance 4-H club for eleven years and have shown dairy cattle for about ten years. By showing dairy cattle I have been able to work with, raise, and train dairy cattle. I'm very fortunate to be able to show dairy cattle, as it has made me who I am today. I have not always been successful when showing my cows, especially when I was younger and had just started to work with cows. It was difficult for me to accept that I wasn't always going to win, but this only pushed me to try harder and work with my animals even more. Showing dairy cattle has opened so many doors for me. I have participated in dairy judging and am a member of the Weld County Dairy Council. Both of these activities have helped me become more responsible and have improved my public speaking ability.

I also hope to have a career working in the dairy industry. I have learned skills such as leadership and hard work through showing dairy and hope that these skills along with knowledge about cows that I hope will benefit me in a future.

More Parodies

Want to learn more about cattle in Colorado?

Click on The Story of Dairy Farming and it will take you to a pdf file of the book.

Click on the *Cattle in Colorado History* and you will go to an online interactive publication.

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