

Milk Makers Fest

An annual event began in 1993 by the Whatcom County Dairy Women. (Farm Friends Program Manager, Cheryl DeHaan, has coordinated this program since its inception.) Each spring, the first grade students from all Whatcom County school districts are invited to participate. On average, 72 classrooms or nearly 2000 students, teachers, and parent chaperones, learn about the #1 Ag commodity, the dairy industry at the dairy barn at the Northwest Washington Fair grounds. The students are led through six different stations by Group Leaders. Station Leaders at each of the stations teach them about different aspects of a typical dairy operation.



At the Milking Parlor station, the students learn how cows are milked and about average milk production. They also get a chance to feel



the pulsation of a real milk machine and have a turn at milking the model cow "Twister." An average cow produces 7 ½ gallons, or 140 8-ounce glasses of milk a day.



The Calf and Herd Health station teaches about different breeds of dairy cattle, how they are kept healthy, and general care. There are comparisons made to how much milk a calf drinks a day to a human baby and eartags are explained, why it's important for calves to get their mothers colostrums (first milk full of natural antibodies), and so much more. Calves and heifers of several growth stages and breeds are on display. There are Holsteins, Brown Swiss, Jerseys and Guernsey's on Whatcom County farms.



The Circle of Farming is one of the most popular stations. Here students learn how everything is



interrelated and connected on the dairy farm. Grass is chopped to feed the cows, the cows give us milk (and other dairy products) to eat, they also give us manure to recycle onto the fields along with lots of water to grow more nutritious grass which is then cut for hay or silage to feed the cows.....get the picture! The students are allowed to touch, see and smell many different crops, such as grass & corn silage, rolled corn, beet pulp, alfalfa hay and cotton seed. An average cow drinks up to 50 gallons of water a day, a whole bathtub

full....and gives the farmer about 15 gallons of manure each day to recycle as natural fertilizer on the farms fields.

The Whatcom County Dairy Ambassadors hand out chocolate milk and explain all the nutritional benefits of dairy products in a daily diet at the Dairy Products station. The students first wash their hands behind a real Milk Truck tanker, just like the ones that visit the local farms to pick up their milk for processing. The students have a chance to interact with a real “princess” and many write back to tell us this was their favorite station.



There is also a large hay maze set up in one end of the barn with lots of farm animals on display. This is the first time many have seen a llama in person, or real chickens, rabbits, pigs, goats and even cats and dogs. These are animals that farm kids take for granted, but most urban kids only see in a picture book or on t.v. The students have a chance to unwind a bit and meander through the maze and even touch and pet many different animals



The last station for some is the Wagon Ride. Wagons are hooked up behind real tractors and drivers take the students on a Scavenger Hunt around the fairgrounds. They are looking for things that farmers come in contact with routinely, such as hats to shade eyes from the sun and shield from the rain, bags of feed for the farm animals, barn boots that are worn to protect the feet, bales of hay and many other items.

Each Station Leader has a “script” of sorts to use in helping to explain and teach about the daily life on a dairy. They learn about the animals, milk production, safety, health care, feeding, breeding, and products that are produced from that wonderful milk the cow gives. Did you know that milk is the only product that is harvested at least twice every single day, 365 days a year!

Got Milk! Whatcom County dairy farmers do.....

