There are approximately 7,000 dairy cows in Alabama on 35 farms. Alabama dairy cows produce over 10.7 million gallons of milk annually, ranking the state 45th in U.S. milk production. The top milk-producing counties are Houston, Morgan, Fayette and Cullman. One dairy cow provides about 1,528 gallons of milk per year, or 5 gallons of milk daily.

In 2016, a dairy cow in Alabama cost about $1,760. The average value of a day's milk per cow was $7.52 in 2016. An average dairy cow weighs 1,400 pounds. It takes 12 pounds of whole milk to make one gallon of ice cream. Most dairy cows are milked two to three times per day.

A cow must give birth before she can produce milk. A cow that is milking eats about 100 pounds of feed daily. The feed is a combination of hay, grain, silage, proteins, vitamins and minerals. Raw milk is pasteurized to extend shelf life and kill harmful bacteria. During this process, the milk temperature is raised to at least 161 F for 16 seconds and then rapidly cooled. June is National Dairy Month. It typically takes less than 48 hours for milk to reach grocery shelves from the time it leaves the dairy farm.

The value of all milk products sold from U.S. dairy farms is nearly $37.2 billion annually. The dairy production and processing industry accounts for over 900,000 jobs in the U.S. Seventy percent of the calcium needs of the U.S. population are supplied by milk and dairy products. The U.S. dairy industry contributes less than 2 percent of total environmental “greenhouse gasses” and has reduced its carbon footprint by 60 percent the in past six decades.

Sources:
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