Ideas for Dairy Cow Learning Activities

Beginning Level

Need more ideas for your dairy cow project? There are hundreds of things you can do! You are being asked to complete at least five activities each year. Use this list, the 4-H Dairy Cow Resource Handbook, and your imagination, and then write your ideas in your Dairy Cow Project and Record Book. Have fun!

- Locate and identify the parts of a dairy cow.
- Create a poster with pictures of at least three breeds of dairy cattle. Present the poster to your club and tell about two characteristics of each breed.
- Attend a dairy show and watch the evaluation of the animals. Listen to the judge’s comments on placings.
- Explain some characteristics to look for when selecting a dairy cow for a 4-H project.
- Using a picture or diagram, describe the nutrient content of milk.
- Visit a grocery store to find and make a list of five nondairy food products that are considered by-products of dairy cows.
- Demonstrate that you can identify the different parts of the ruminant digestive system.
- Name the six classes of nutrients.
- Collect five samples of feed ingredients commonly fed to dairy cows and tell the major use each serves in the ration as a source of protein, vitamins, minerals, energy, or water.
- Using a feed tag from a feed that you fed your cow, demonstrate that you can identify the various parts of the feed tag.
- Describe what a sick cow might look like.
- Make a chart describing the symptoms associated with each of the following diseases: milk fever, acidosis, bloat, and hardware disease.
- Define the term mastitis.
- Describe the symptoms associated with mastitis.
- Define the following terms related to dairy cattle genetics: dam, sire and inheritance.
- Draw a family tree for your cow. Identify the dam, sire, granddams, grandsires, and any offspring.
• Demonstrate that you can identify the parts of the mammary gland.
• Define the following terms: dry cow, lactation, and udder.
• List at least two types of records that a diary producer should keep and for each one, give two reasons why the record is important. Make a rope halter for your cow.
• Wash your cow.
• Observe the birth of a calf. Describe the behavior of the calf and the dam following birth.
• Describe or demonstrate three ways you could identify your project animal.
• Teach your cow to lead.
• Make a chart that lists the top 15 dairy producing states in terms of total milk production.
• Complete the Project Picture pages in the Quality Assurance section of this book.
• Identify all parts of the Medication Insert in the Quality Assurance section of this book.
• Complete the Lactation Curve Activity in the Animal Records section of this book.
• Exhibit your cow at the county fair.
• Send a thank you note to award donors and anyone who helped you with your project (advisors, older members, parents, etc.).