



## Cows in the Dairy Industry



**S**ay hello to our (not-so) little friends, Oats and Cashew! Oats and Cashew are baby cows, or calves. They came to us from a small, family-run dairy farms. Most people picture farms as pastoral scenes, but that's not often the case. The boys came to us when they were about a month old. At first, these motherless babies were terrified of us. But they learned quickly that we were friends, and that their life at Tamerlaine would be different.

It's a strange feeling when a calf that stands almost as tall as you attempts to nurse from your fingers, but that's just what Oats and Cashew did when they arrived here. At about a month old, the cows were still being bottle-fed. Within a few weeks, the brothers were out exploring their new digs and meeting their (REALLY) big brothers, Diego and Little Fred.

Their personalities became evident once they were old enough to move from the baby barn into their own pasture each day. While Cashew is a bit nosy, checking out everything in and around the area, Oats is content to soak up the sun, chewing his cud, and watching the world go by. Cashew is the goofier brother, more likely to jump in mock-fear and do a kicking lap around the field, while Oats watches, seeming SO over such childish

seemingly SO over such childish antics. One thing's for sure, though: both brothers are equally affectionate towards their caretakers. They're eager to moosh their heads into your hand for an eye rub, and quick with a kiss. So quick, in fact, you need to watch out or a rough black tongue will scratch up your cheek.

Like Cashew and Oats, all cows are playful by nature with distinct personalities. They experience complex emotions, and mother cows are known for their doting nature. When permitted, mother cows will nurse up to three years. They grieve when separated from their loved ones and search for their babies, often crying out for days, when they're taken. Studies have shown that cow herds display *emotional contagion*—they pick up on the feelings of the cows around them. Some caretakers report that, like dogs, cows seem to know when they are feeling low, and will offer comfort. And, even more, that just like we do, cows turn to their friends in times of distress. Cows are social animals, so being isolated is very stressful. They don't do well alone. Most cows have at least one best friend they enjoy spending time with. In our herd, Cashew has Oats, Little Fred—seen below—has Diego.



Little Fred almost weighs a ton now, but still thinks he's a just big, lovable, lapdog. Viola, our farm manager, agrees.





Because cows are usually raised for food, few studies have been conducted on their intelligence beyond how they perform tasks related to farming them—such as locating food. However, what studies there are show that cows have strong memories. They remember faces and are happy to see friends, even after long absences. They can find objects by remembering where they saw them last and can use past experiences to make decisions or predict what might happen in the short-term future. Hey! So do we!

Worldwide, there are about a billion cows. Most of these cows are divided into two groups: cows raised for the dairy industry or cows raised for the meat industry. Of that billion, 264 million are dairy cows. The rest are raised for meat. In the US, about 9.5 million dairy cows are providing milk at any time during a year. Many would argue that the dairy industry is the cruelest form of animal agriculture.

To produce milk, a female cow (like all mammals) must give birth. Cows are not impregnated by bulls, but rather by having bull semen forcefully inserted by humans. This is done at a rack in which the cow is restrained and unable to move. Within the year, they are artificially inseminated at the rack again.

Like us, cows give birth every 9 months. However, 97% of babies are removed from their mothers in the first 24 hours. The mothers are then hooked up to machines and milked regularly until their milk dries up. The milking continues once the cow is impregnated again. When she can no longer produce enough milk to earn her keep, she is sent to slaughter. To prevent that, dairy cows may be given an artificial growth hormone to increase milk production. Although the USDA does not regulate the use of this hormone in dairy cows because it has ruled it to be harmless in humans, it has been banned in Canada, many parts of Europe, Australia, and New Zealand. The reason? It increases the risk of mastitis, a terribly painful breast infection.

Mastitis is already a leading cause of death in dairy cows, killing 1 in 6 in the USA. Mastitis is so common, that the

USDA makes allowances for pus cells in milk and cheese products— 750,000 cells/mL to be exact. Tests performed on cheese that contained high levels of pus cells show that it didn't taste as good or clot as well as cheese with less pus. But the USDA insists that the health risks are nil, because milk is pasteurized.

Mastitis must be treated with antibiotics, which are passed on in secretions. Exposure to these antibiotics through milk and cheeses weakens our own immune response and makes them less able to heal us when we need them. What's worse, milk from cows given artificial hormones has more of a sugar known to increase a risk of cancers. The USDA doesn't care about any of this.

The cycle of birthing and milking sickens many cows to the point that they cannot walk. By the time they are loaded up for slaughter, they must be lifted by loaders. It happens frequently enough that there is a term for these cows: "downed cows." And yes: they are still sold for food. Slaughtered dairy cows are the source of about 6% of all beef and 18% of ground beef in the US. There is no escape, no mercy, and no compassion.



A cow looks on while others with full, swollen udders wait to be hooked up to the milking machine.

As soon as a cow is born into the dairy industry, life is brutal. The few dairy farms that allow calves to stay with their mothers often employ a "weaning ring." This is a barbaric instrument: a circular ring with spikes on it





or a plate that blocks a calf's mouth. It is inserted into a calf's nostrils and tightened with a wingnut. The goal of both is the same: to prevent a cow from obtaining the nutrients and comfort it needs from its mother when it attempts to nurse. The spikes are painful, and cause the mother to reject a calf's attempts, leaving the calf confused and distressed; the plate prevents the calf from gaining access to an udder, despite its best efforts. These rings are often used on female babies that are separated from their mothers, too. In their distress, they may seek the missing comfort of nursing from other calves, which damages their udder tissues.



Weaning rings are designed to force mothers to reject their calves' requests to nurse or find comfort.

Female calves are usually isolated in "hutches" for about 2-3 months after they are born. Naturally social, being alone so young is incredibly stressful for them. Eventually, they are moved into larger pens until they are old enough to be impregnated and begin the hard life of a dairy cow.

Male cows—like Cashew and Oats—are no better off. Because they were born male in the dairy industry, they cannot earn their feed, and so are sold to be raised as veal. Veal calves are placed in two-foot-wide crates, too small to turn around. Europe and many other countries have banned cruel veal crates. Yet in the US, only nine states have banned this form of extreme confinement.

The most expensive veal is "milk-fed" veal, prized for its pale color and soft texture. "Milk-fed" calves are not,

in fact, fed milk; they are denied any solid food or water. They are fed a formula low in iron to make them anemic. It also has a laxative effect that results in chronic, painful diarrhea, a burning rectum, and rashes down their legs. To help with these issues, the formula may be laced with antibiotics that pass on in the meat. Inside the sad, tiny stalls, babies are tethered by the neck to so they can't t. The atrophied muscles and the anemia creates soft, pale veal. In other words, these calves suffering intensely for their entire lives to suit a stranger's momentary whim for pale, soft meat.

Baby cows are slaughtered by 16 weeks. "Bob" veal is different. The flesh from these cows is made into low-grade products, such as hot dogs. These cows are killed at just 3 weeks of age. Even in their death, there is no dignity. 60% of all leather sold is a "co-product" of the cow meat and dairy industries. In terms of saving lives, there is no difference between the meat and the dairy industries: they all end up being killed for meat.

If you've read this far, you care enough to help, and that's wonderful. It's so easy. Choose nondairy milks and cheeses, instead of milk made for babies of another species. It's better for your health...and for the cows. Cashew and Oats escaped a horrible fate, luckily, and are living their best lives, happily grazing and playing at Tamerlaine. Now, they live with a herd of five other rescued cows, and they will spend the rest of their lives in peace. We are so grateful for our cows, and for compassionate people like you who helped create the safe, happy home that Oats, below, and the rest of our herds enjoys--and deserves.

