Beef Farming (WBCI1103\_2) Script

Okay, so we know why beef is an important part of our diet.

But how is beef raised? And what’s life like on a beef farm in Wisconsin?

Beef cattle are raised on beef farms. Many are family owned operations where the entire family pitches in to help care for the cattle.

Cattle are “domesticated” animals. That means that they depend on people to help provide them with proper food, water, and shelter.

Each year, the cows on a beef farm are bred and give birth to a calf. This is a busy time for the beef farmers giving shelter and care to the cows and newborn calves. In Wisconsin this usually happens during the spring.

During the first few months, calves drink their mother’s milk. It gives them the extra nutrition they need to get started in life.

Because they are “bovines” they also begin grazing grass and are eventually weaned from their mother’s milk when they are about 7-8 months old… which usually happens in the fall.

At this point, they begin grazing on pastures, or, depending on the time of year, are fed hay and grain. Hay is cut grass, legumes, and other plants.

On some farms, the kids who live there help take care of the calves at this age. As part of their daily chores, they make sure the calves have clean water. They also feed them grain in feeders, plus give them alfalfa hay to eat.

Beef farmers may also use veterinarians to give both calves and adult cattle needed vaccinations and medical care.

When the calves weigh about 800 pounds, and are 12 to 16 months old, some are sold to cattle farms where they are raised on pasture or in feed yards.

Some of the calves are also cleaned, groomed, and taken to “cattle shows”. The kids can help with this part and get to travel to different places. The show calves are shown and sold at auction to other beef farmers or taken back home to become breeding stock.

Many cattle are eventually moved to feed yards where they are fed a healthy balanced diet for them, such as corn grain, whole plant corn silage, corn stalks and forages such as hay.

Some cattle continue to graze in pastures their entire life.

Adult cattle have thick hair and hide to keep them warm and comfortably live outside during the Wisconsin winter. Actually if you see cows with snow on their back and not melting, this means they are warm and comfortable.

When cattle weigh about 1300 pounds and are 18 to 22 months old, the ‘finished’ cattle are sold to the meat processors to be made into retail products you see in the grocery store.

The rest of the cattle stay on the farm for raising the next year’s calves.

Okay, besides providing lean beef to eat…

What other ways do these animals contribute to our lives?

Your first clue is to simply look around your house. There, you’ll find items partially made from the fats or proteins that come from cattle. A few might surprise you.

Plus, lots of different Textiles, like belts and shoes come from cowhides.

You see, the antifreeze found in vehicles contains glycerol – which is derived from fat.

The asphalt roads that you drive on contain a binding agent from beef fat.

And even the tires on our vehicles have stearic acid from beef fat. It’s what makes the rubber hold its shape!

So really, these amazing cattle provide us with nutrition, plus lots of everyday household items and even help with our transportation. That’s a wow for the cow.