This
little
calf...

ANIMAL
AID

Dairy's dirty secret

The fate of calves is one of the dairy industry's dirty secrets. Cows must be made pregnant to produce milk, and the resulting calves are separated from their mothers soon after birth. Many females will go on to replace their mothers in the herd. But the males are often regarded as mere by-products, because they will never produce milk and are the wrong breed for beef. Some will be reared for veal before being slaughtered at a few months old, but many will simply be shot in the head at just a day old.

Natural?

Female mammals produce milk for their young, but their offspring will stop drinking milk once they are old enough to eat solids. Only humans continue to consume milk into adulthood, and only humans consume the milk of other species. The fact that more than half the global adult population is intolerant to a sugar called lactose found in cows' milk is evidence of how unnatural this is.

Milk-producing machines

Under natural circumstances, cows produce only enough milk to feed their newborn calves. The dairy industry ensures a constant supply of milk by repeatedly impregnating cows, invariably by artificial insemination. Through increasingly intensive breeding and feeding regimes, they are forced to produce as much as 50 litres of milk per day – many times more than is natural.

Disease

More than half of UK dairy cows go lame each year and many suffer from laminitis – an agonising inflammation of the feet. These leg and foot problems are due to their unnatural diet, swollen udders, the build up of faeces in their housing, and other factors.

Mastitis is a painful infection that results in swollen, weeping udders and can often cause pus to seep into milk. There are around 50 cases of mastitis for every 100 cows in the UK each year and current regulations allow milk to contain hundreds of millions of pus cells per litre.

Zero-grazed

Our desire for cheap milk products means that an increasing proportion of the UK milk yield comes from 'zero-grazed' animals, who are almost permanently confined in barren sheds.

Goat and sheep milk

Milk from other animals, such as goats and sheep, is produced in a similar way, with most goats and a growing number of sheep being zero-grazed.

Overworked

Cows would naturally live for as long as 25 years but, by the time they reach five on modern farms, they are likely to be physically exhausted, and may be lame and infertile. No longer able to produce the quantities of milk demanded of them by the dairy industry, these worn-out animals are taken to a slaughterhouse to be made into cheap meat products.

Milk and health

We don't need milk to stay healthy as we can obtain all the nutrients we need from plant-based foods.

Cows' milk contains powerful hormones that spur the rapid growth of calves. One of these, called IGF-1, has been reported to accelerate the growth of malignant tumours in people and is associated with the development of prostate, breast and ovarian cancers. Milk has also been linked to allergies and a range of other health problems.

Egg-laying hens suffer too

It's not just dairy cows and their calves who suffer at the hands of the farming industry. Did you know that the male chicks of egg-laying hens are usually killed at just a day old? Or that half of British eggs still come from hens kept in crowded cages? You can find out more about the suffering of chickens at www.animalaid.org.uk.

Choose vegan

Choosing not to buy meat, milk and eggs is the best way to ensure your food is cruelty-free. And with supermarkets and high street shops now stocking a huge range of animal-free products, it's never been easier to go vegan.

For a FREE Go Vegan pack, contact Animal Aid at:
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