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### June is Dairy Month Where are the Dairy Farms in Alabama?

Dairy farms across Alabama are declining fast. According to Randall Armstrong, County Coordinator for the Lauderdale County Extension system, the last dairy farm in Lauderdale County closed in 2005. There are only 82 dairy farms located in 38 different counties left in Alabama. There is only one dairy operating in the Lauderdale, Colbert, and Franklin County area. The largest group of dairies that remain are in Cullman, Lawrence, and Morgan Counties. Wayne Robinson, regional extension agent for dairy with the Alabama Cooperative Extension System, attributed the shrinking dairy farms to three reasons, "The price of milk, the lack of labor and waste management are the main reasons dairy farmers across Alabama are closing." Most of the milk processed in Alabama is shipped in from southwest states such as Texas and New Mexico.

The United States Department of Agriculture recommends getting 3 servings of dairy products a day. Milk is the first dairy product people usually think of, but cheese and yogurt also provide the much needed mineral. An 8-ounce serving of milk provides 30% of the Daily Value of calcium. Calcium helps

build and maintain strong bones and teeth. This mineral also plays an important role in nerve function, muscle contraction and blood clotting.

Did you know? Cows eat about 90 pounds of nutritious food a day. Ninety pounds of food equals 480 hamburgers or 1440 slices of bread. Cows drink 25-50 gallons of water each day. That's nearly a bathtub full of water.

What a cow eats affects how much milk she makes. A cow that only eats grass can make about 50 glasses of milk a day. A cow that eats grass, corn, hay and mixed feed can make about 100 glasses of milk a day. Farmers can milk about 100 cows an hour, using several milking machines. Milking by hand, you could milk about 6 cows an hour.

Milk is one of the safest foods you can eat. In the dairy it is never touched by human hands, keeping it pure and fresh-tasting. In 1884, dairy plants started using glass bottles to store milk. Before that time they used jars, pails and cans. In 1906, the first paper milk carton was used. Plastic milk jugs were first used in 1964.

Long ago, when people traveled and wanted milk, they had to take cows with them. The Pilgrims brought cows with them when they came to America. Nowadays, the milk that is delivered to stores, schools and even homes was in a cow 2 days ago.

During June, Alabamians celebrate Dairy Month. Impress your friends and family with these milk facts and be sure to drink your milk, but also enjoy cheese, yogurt and ice cream.

Try this great smoothie recipe in honor of June Dairy Month:

### **Strawberry Banana Smoothie**

1 1/2 cups 1% lowfat milk

1 pint lowfat vanilla yogurt

2 ripe bananas, peeled, sliced

1 1/4 cups sliced strawberries

2 tablespoons honey

12-14 ice cubes

In blender jar, combine milk, yogurt, bananas, strawberries and honey; add enough ice to measure 6 cups in blender. Process until smooth, scraping sides as necessary. Garnish each serving with strawberry slice and fresh mint if desired.

Makes 5 servings (8 ounces each).