



A Dairy Cow's Blog

as told by
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Hello! I am a newly formed bovine embryo inside my mother. I was created as a result of artificial insemination using the very popular Holstein bull named Advent. I will move into my mother's uterus around 4 days after conception. When I'm 40 days old, a veterinarian will sweep an ultrasound over my mother's uterus and tell the farmer the good news: his cow is pregnant. One month later, the same veterinarian will ultrasound my mother's uterus again, and the news will be revealed that I am going to be a heifer (female) calf. The farmer is thrilled when he hears this, and he also knows that I might be a red and white Holstein, a rare recessive trait.

Around 280 days after I was formed, I am born into the world at a hefty 110 pounds. I am indeed a red and white Holstein heifer calf, and everyone jumps for joy because I am a rarity in cow circles. After birth, I am taken into a clean, dry calf hutch that I have all to myself. I am fed one gallon of my mother's first milk (colostrum). Pretty soon I start growing like a champ. I'm getting milk replacer and starter grain to eat and I'm gaining over 2 pounds per day. When I'm 2 months old, I am placed in a pen with 10 other calves my age. I like the socialization time with my peer group. We aren't fed milk anymore, but I'm ok with that, since I was starting to get a little bored with the kiddie diet. Instead, we are fed grain and hay.

A few months later, I'm taken to another barn. The farmer gives me and my friends vaccinations that will prevent illnesses like pneumonia and ensure my reproductive health. I don't really like needles, but the shots were quick and painless. Before you know it, I'm over a year old, I weigh 800 pounds, and I'm moved to a different barn with a large group of heifers. I'm given my yearly vaccinations by the farmer. Soon, I'm artificially inseminated just like my mother was. A few weeks later, the veterinarian discreetly uses that high-tech ultrasound machine and tells the farmer that I'm pregnant. Fortunately, since I'm a cow, I don't really get mood swings, morning sickness, and cravings. I just go about my business for the next 9 months.

I'm starting to feel big as a cow (ha ha) when I'm moved to a bigger barn with a group of other expectant mothers. Finally, the big day comes, and I have my first calf. It seems like my baby was born on the clean straw before I could blink. The farmer takes my beautiful heifer calf into a clean dry pen and feeds it my first milk. I'm happy to know she will be well taken care of. Soon they take me into the milking parlor for the first time. Being a little nervous, I kick the milking machine off because it is a very unusual, although painless, sensation. In a few days, I'm used to it and I won't kick the milker off anymore. I've heard through the grapevine that not getting milked in a timely manner feels a whole lot worse!

I'm placed in a big pen with 80 other cows. I'm given my yearly vaccinations again. We are given big clean stalls to lie down in. I get all the water and feed that I care to consume. In just a few weeks, I'm milking 85 pounds of milk every day. I'm happy and fulfilled, because that is what I was born to do. After I've been milking for 3 months, I get pregnant again. They keep on milking me until I'm 7 months pregnant. At that time, I get to relax for 2 months without getting milked. After the two months is up, I have another calf and I'm getting milked again. It's a good thing, because I was starting to get tired of just lying around all day like a barn potato. This time around, I'm milking over 100 pounds per day. I've never felt better. The farmer takes very good care of me, because his family depends on me to provide their livelihood. I have a pretty good life. I even get to go to the Wayne County Fair once a year where I dazzle the crowds and win a ribbon or two. Too bad they won't let me eat any of those Lerch's Donuts.