

Myth and Fact: Antibiotics

Dairy Delivers the Real Facts on Antibiotics

Dairy farmers follow strict rules regarding the use of antibiotics. Antibiotics **are not used routinely** for dairy cows and **never** added to their feed or water prophylactically. The cost of using unnecessary antibiotics is high, not only from the cost of the drug, but because the milk of a cow on antibiotics cannot be sold. If antibiotics are detected in a tanker of milk, the farmer must incur significant cost for the entire tanker and may lose the right to sell milk in the future.

Each and every load of milk is tested for antibiotics multiple times and at multiple stages of the supply chain. This process is very effective and the actual incidence of antibiotic or other drug residues in milk is very rare. During 2017, nearly four million tests were conducted on milk samples to detect antibiotic or other drug residues. Inspectors found less than 0.02% positive results for residues, and any milk testing positive was destroyed—it never reached the consumer market.¹

Cow care is crucial to preventing infection and maintaining healthy dairy cows. There are a number of ways dairy farmers try to minimize infection:

- Cows receive regular veterinary care, including periodic check-ups, preventative vaccinations and prompt treatment of illness.
- Cows are housed as groups; new cows are carefully introduced to reduce new pathogens.
- Bedding is part of infection prevention. Beds are cleaned regularly and non-organic materials, like sand, that don't support bacterial growth, are often used for cow comfort and infection risk reduction.
- Farmers use personnel trained to notice changes in cow behavior to closely monitor the herd for early signs and symptoms of illness such as lethargy, reduced feed intake, low fever and changed milk appearance. If a cow is experiencing symptoms, a trained herdsman does a complete evaluation, including testing for infection before any treatment is initiated.
- Many farmers are using technology, including tracking devices for temperature, steps and heart rate to monitor the health of their cows.



Antibiotics are only used when a cow is sick. When illness requires that cows be treated, antibiotics are administered according to strict FDA guidelines, which includes withholding milk from treated cows so that it never leaves the farm and cannot be sold or used for food for people. When a cow's milk is withheld, she is given special care and attention separate from the rest of the milking herd until her milk is once again free of antibiotics. Farmers keep detailed records to help ensure the responsible use of antibiotics.



TAKE AWAY MESSAGE

Milk does not contain antibiotics. Dairy cows are not routinely or prophylactically treated with antibiotics. Cow care includes maintaining clean environments to reduce risk for infection. Dairy cows are monitored for signs and symptoms of illness by trained personnel. When antibiotic use is necessary, the dairy cow is closely tracked to ensure that her milk is not used. Each and every load of milk is tested multiple times and in multiple stages of the supply chain to ensure a wholesome antibiotic free dairy product. Cow's milk is safe.

Learn more about the great taste and health benefits of dairy foods at www.Drink-Milk.com

References

¹ USDHHS/FDA/CFSN. 2017. National milk drug residue data base. Accessed 2018 July.

² How Milk is Tested for Antibiotics, NDC. <https://www.nationaldairyCouncil.org/content/2014/how-milk-is-tested-for-antibiotics>

³ FARM (Farmers Assuring Responsible Management) Animal Care Program. <http://www.nationaldairyfarm.com/antibiotic-stewardship>