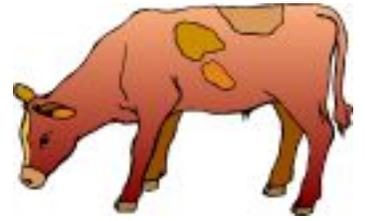


Cattle

Cattle have been domesticated for thousands of years. Before the Industrial Revolution of the 18th century, cattle were used to pull carts or to plow fields by farmers all over the world. Nowadays, farmers prefer using machines. It is a rare scene to see farmers using cattle as farm helpers. Although cattle's role in farming has diminished since the invention of machines, they are still found on farms. On today's farms, cattle are mainly raised for their meat, hides (leather), and milk.



Cattle belong to the family *Bovidae*. Like other family members (such as the impala, gazelle, bison, yak, musk ox, and goat), cattle have three distinctive features. The first is their even-toed, cloven (divided) hoofed feet. The second is their pointy, hollow, and un-branched horns, usually present in both sexes. And, the third is their 4-chambered stomachs. Animals with several compartments in their stomachs are called ruminants. When ruminants eat grasses or other vegetation, they partially chew their food and store it in their stomachs. Later on, they regurgitate or throw up the food as a cud and chew it again.

Cattle are social animals. They live in large groups, called herds. A herd may consist of just a single or several cattle families. A dominant male (bull) guards a group of females (cows) and their young (calves) protectively. If he feels threatened by the presence of a hungry predator (such as a wolf) or a challenging bull, he will not hesitate to use his best weapon -- his horns -- to fight. Unlike deer, cattle and their *Bovidae* relatives never shed their horns. On the contrary, their horns continue to grow throughout their lives. Asian water buffaloes, for example, have the widest horn span of any member in the *Bovidae* family. Weighing over 2,000 pounds, an Asian water buffalo can easily intimidate its peers or its enemies with its horns that stretch more than 6 1/2 feet!

When you visit a farm, you may hear people referring to cattle not just as bulls, cows, and calves. Instead, you may hear them referring to cattle as steers, oxen (singular: ox), and heifers. What do all these terms mean? Well, a male calf is called a bull calf. A female calf is called a heifer calf. If the male calf is not castrated, he grows to be a bull. Castration is a surgery commonly performed on bull calves to make them more mild-tempered and easier to control. If the male calf is castrated, he becomes a steer. Usually, the steer gets sold for meat. If he remains on the farm, he is trained to do all sorts of hard farming chores, and he may be called an ox. In the case of the heifer calf, things are not as complicated. The heifer calf is called a heifer as she grows older. After she gives birth to her first calf, she becomes a cow.

With as many as 300 different breeds of cattle in the world, we divide them into two groups -- the beef cattle and the dairy cattle. Yes, you have guessed it. Beef cattle are bred for their meat, and dairy cattle are raised for their milk. When scientists did genealogy research on domestic cattle, they discovered that all breeds of domestic cattle are descendents of one wild cattle species, the auroch. Sadly, aurochs did not live long enough to witness how helpful their offspring are to humans. As the last auroch was killed in 1627 in Poland, the ancestor of all domestic cattle is now extinct!

Cattle

Questions

- _____ 1. Which of the following about cattle is correct?
- A. Cattle have three compartments in their stomachs.
 - B. Cattle and deer belong to the same family, called *Bovidae*.
 - C. Cattle have even-toed, cloven, and hoofed feet.
 - D. Cattle shed their horns once a year.

Name _____



Date _____

- _____ 2. The African water buffalo has the widest horn span of all cattle.
- A. true
 - B. false
- _____ 3. Which of the following is NOT related to cattle?
- A. the reindeer
 - B. the impala
 - C. the yak
 - D. the American bison
- _____ 4. What is a ruminant? (Please choose two of the best answers.)
- A. an animal with a single compartment in its stomach
 - B. an animal that regurgitates food as a cud and chews it again
 - C. an animal with more than one compartment in its stomach
 - D. "Ruminant" and "herbivore" are two terms that can be used interchangeably.
- _____ 5. Which of the following about cattle's horns is correct?
- A. They are not pointy.
 - B. They are hollow.
 - C. They fall off once a year.
 - D. They branch out.
- _____ 6. Cattle have an odd number of toes.
- A. false
 - B. true
- _____ 7. A steer is castrated, whereas a bull is not.
- A. false
 - B. true
- _____ 8. Which of the following "cattle terms" is NOT correct?
- A. a cow: a heifer that has already reproduced
 - B. an ox: a group of cattle
 - C. a heifer: a female calf that is yet to reproduce
 - D. a steer: a castrated bull calf
- _____ 9. Which of the following animals is the ancestor to all domestic cattle species?
- A. the auroch
 - B. the Asian water buffalo
 - C. the musk-ox
 - D. the banteng
- _____ 10. When and where was the last of the ancestor to all domestic cattle killed?
- A. 1726, Austria
 - B. 1927, Netherlands
 - C. 1881, Germany
 - D. 1627, Poland