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News Release: Give Me a Home Where the Dairy Cows Roam

By LeAnn R. Ralph

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COLFAX, WISCONSIN --- Did you know that since 1969, the United States has lost 85 percent of its dairy farms. And did you know that since 1969, Wisconsin has lost nearly 70 percent of its dairy farms?

"I lived away from my hometown in west central Wisconsin for 15 years. When I returned in the mid 1990s, I expected to be living in a farming community again. Instead, I discovered that many of the small family dairy farms like the one where I grew up had disappeared" said LeAnn R. Ralph, author of the books Christmas in Dairyland (True Stories from a Wisconsin Farm) (August 2003) and Give Me a Home Where the Dairy Cows Roam (October 2004).

Figures from the Census of Agriculture and from the American Farm Bureau Federation indicate that in 1969 more than a half a million dairy farms operated in the United States, but by the year 2000, only 83,000 dairy farms remained. And according to statistics from the U.S. Census of Agriculture, during the last three decades of the twentieth century, Wisconsin went from 66,000 dairy farms down to 20,000 dairy farms.

"That's why I decided to write stories about growing up on a dairy farm. Our farm was home-steaded by my Norwegian great-grandfather in the late 1800s, but small family farms are a thing of the past. They have pretty much disappeared from the landscape," Ralph said.

"My dad milked 20 cows and knew all of them by name. Nowadays the trend is toward corporate farms that milk hundreds of cows," she said.

Ralph's new book, Give Me a Home Where the Dairy Cows Roam (192 pages; \$13.95; ISBN 1-59113-592-3) is a collection of 20 true stories that took place on her family's farm 40 years ago. Story titles include "Taking the Bull by the Horns," "Spring Cleaning," "A Different Sort of Cow," "Dad's Favorite Recipe," "Popsicle Blues," "On Top of the World," and "Better Butter."

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According to Midwest Book Review, Ralph's first book, *Christmas In Dairyland: True Stories From A Wisconsin Farm* "is a heartwarming anthology of true anecdotes of rural life on a Wisconsin dairy farm. Even though Wisconsin is still known as America's Dairyland, life on a family homestead is fast being replaced by corporate agribusiness, and the memories treasured in *Christmas In Dairyland* are quickly becoming unique milestones of an era needing to be preserved in thought and print for the sake of future generations. *Christmas In Dairyland* is simply wonderful reading and is a 'must' for all Wisconsin public library collections."

Ralph earned a Bachelor of Arts in English with a writing emphasis from the University of Wisconsin–Whitewater and also earned a Master of Arts in Teaching from UW–Whitewater. She worked as a newspaper reporter for nine years and also has taught English at a boys' boarding school. She is the editor of the Wisconsin Regional Writer (the quarterly publication of the Wisconsin Regional Writers' Assoc.).

Give Me a Home Where the Dairy Cows Roam and *Christmas in Dairyland (True Stories from a Wisconsin Farm)* are available through Barnes & Noble and

. For more information or to

order the books, visit

or call LeAnn at (715) 962–3368.

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LeAnn R. Ralph is the author of the books "*Give Me a Home Where the Dairy Cows Roam*" and "*Christmas in Dairyland*."

Why Vegans Don't Consume Dairy Products?

By David Hooper

As with most dietary questions, vegans are split on the issue of dairy products— not so much on the question of whether or not they are acceptable, but instead for what reasons they should not be consumed.

All vegans (or at least true vegans) abstain from consuming dairy products. Some do so for nutritional reasons; others abstain for ethical reasons.

Those who do it for nutritional reasons cite a range of health problems related to the consumption of dairy products, including high cholesterol. Many also have a problem digesting lactose or have a

blood–iron or diabetic problem related to milk protein, casein. In addition to this, milk and cheese often contain small portions of undesirable hormones that are added to dairy cow feeds to increase production.

Those who abstain from consuming dairy products for ethical reasons also have a range of reasons for doing so.

Some cite the poor treatment of dairy cows as a main reason for not consuming milk and cheese. They note that dairy cows are forced to become pregnant once each year to maintain a constantly high yield of milk. They are also fed numerous steroids to increase production.

Others who abstain for ethical reasons often cite the maltreatment of dairy cow offspring. They note that calves are not allowed to spend time with or suckle from the mother, but instead are prematurely removed to be reared for either veal production, beef production, or as replacement dairy cows.

The calves selected for "veal" production are often forced to live in crates so tiny that they cannot turn around. They must face in one direction; they cannot groom themselves; and they are fed hormone–laden feed until they are sent off to be slaughtered.

If you are a prospective vegan, you may want to take some time now to think about what is best for you. Ask yourself whether you wanted to become a vegan for ethical reasons, dietary reasons, or both. And from there, determine whether or not these arguments were strong enough to compel you to do so. Either way, you should emerge with a stronger viewpoint and a better understanding of what you do and do not want.

Kirsten Hawkins is a vegetarian and nutrition expert from Nashville, TN. Visit

for more information on vegetarian recipes and resources.

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