



*The Web Site of The Sacramento Bee*

This story is taken from Sacbee / Community News / Natomas News.

---

## **Cow College**

### **Mobile classroom teaches children where milk comes from**

**By Edgar Sanchez - [esanchez@sacbee.com](mailto:esanchez@sacbee.com)**

**Published 12:00 am PST Thursday, January 24, 2008**

Six-year-old Adezha Henry had only seen cows in the movies and on TV.

So she became nervous when she heard that a live cow would visit Northwood Elementary School in Hagginwood, where she is a first-grader.

"I thought it was scary," Adezha said.

But her fears vanished after she petted Delfina, a 2-week-old Holstein that is one of the stars of the Mobile Dairy Classroom sponsored by the Dairy Council of California.

The classroom on wheels – a trailer pulled by a truck – also carried Mary Anne, a 5-year-old, 1,200-pound Guernsey cow.

Mary Anne is the mother of four cows, but Delfina isn't one of them, Heston Nunes, instructor for the roving classroom, said.

"Delfina is not Mary Anne's baby," Nunes told about 200 students gathered in the school's playground.

In fact, the cows look so different – Mary Anne is white and light brown, Delfina is white and reddish – it is clear they are no relation.

Nunes began his 30-minute presentation by asking the boys and girls not to scream, "so you won't spook Mary Anne."

At first, the children were unaware that Delfina was also present. The calf remained in her own section of the trailer until she was introduced as the day's surprise.

Unlike Delfina, Mary Anne never touched the ground. She remained inside her stable, with the side of it open.

Any time she hits the road, Mary Anne rides standing, her head between two posts or stanchions that serve as her seat belts, Nunes said.

"Mary Anne can't bite you," Nunes added. "She has 32 teeth, but no front top teeth. She pulls food into her mouth with her tongue. Her stomach is broken into four compartments."

Mary Anne, currently pregnant, produces 6 gallons of milk a day.

Milking her by hand would take about an hour every day, so she is milked with a milking claw, a device with rubber-lined tubes that attach to her udder. They reduce the milking time to 12 to 15 minutes a day.

If a cow isn't milked regularly, it becomes uncomfortable.

The warm milk is piped into a bulk tank that is transferred to a processing plant. There, the milk is pasteurized and homogenized before being made into butter, ice cream, yogurt, cheese or other products.

Adezha was clearly impressed.

Asked what she had learned, she said:

"That cows milk for 10 months, and they rest for two months."

Her teacher, Susan Fribourg, also was enthralled.

"Our children have few field trips ... and this was a wonderful presentation," Fribourg said. "Bringing reality to the school is a way to extend students' knowledge.

"If you bring the real McCoy, they get a better understanding of the information you are presenting."

The Mobile Dairy Classroom began in the Los Angeles area in the 1930s to teach children how milk and dairy foods were produced. The program has always included a live cow.

"The program started in urban areas, but then we realized that even children in suburban areas didn't have exposure to farm animals," said Sara E. Miller, a Dairy Council spokeswoman.

"The program gives children around the state a chance to experience agriculture firsthand," she said. "Many of these children may not have seen a cow before."

Today, the council has five full-time instructors who drive their mobile classrooms to elementary schools across California.

The cows that visited Northwood were on loan.

Mary Ann was borrowed from Bay Meadow Farm in Galt, while Delfina was from Morris Farms in Modesto.

Funded by dairy producers and milk processors, the Dairy Council is a state government entity overseen by the State Department of Food and Agriculture.

"As an organization, the council promotes healthy eating from all of the food groups, not just milk," Miller said.

-----  
Go to: [Sacbee](#) / [Back to story](#)

This article is protected by copyright and should not be printed or distributed for anything except personal use.

The Sacramento Bee, 2100 Q St., P.O. Box 15779, Sacramento, CA 95852  
Phone: (916) 321-1000

Copyright © The Sacramento Bee