



## A 1,200-pound teacher's aide

With help of visiting cows,  
students at Maryland Elementary

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Many had seen cows. Some had even touched one before, and most knew where milk came from.

But students at Maryland Elementary School were surprised by what they learned Tuesday morning.

Cristopher Galan, 10, stood in front of Justine, a 1,200-pound Jersey cow, and marveled at how much she weighed.

"I didn't know they grew so big," said Cristopher, a fourth-grader at Maryland Elementary.

Justine's visit was part of the Dairy Council of California's education program, which teaches about 300,000 students each year about the production of milk and other dairy products. The mobile dairy classroom began in

Steve Miller, an instructor with the Dairy Council of California, shows a milking claw to Maryland Elementary School students Tuesday in Vista. Behind Miller is Justine, a 1,200-pound Jersey cow.  
Eduardo Contreras | Union-Tribune

the 1930s in the Los Angeles area.

Second-grade teacher Lillian Galasso said the visit tied in with what students were learning in the classroom.

“It complements our nutrition education,” Galasso said. “This is an extra exposure that they may not get otherwise.”

Students in kindergarten through fifth grade learned that most dairy cows only live to be about 12 years old; their newborns weigh as much as 80 pounds; and they can produce 4 to 15 gallons of milk each day.

Steve Miller, an instructor with the Dairy Council of California, talked to students about the anatomy of cows and their lactation cycle. He showed them a milking claw, telling students how much faster it is to milk a cow using a machine instead of by hand. They learned what dairy cows have to eat in order to be able to produce a lot of milk.

“See what’s here. This is alfalfa grass. It’s rich in protein and calcium,” Miller said. “And they eat grain. They eat about 40 pounds of food per day.”

Miller, who makes 165 school presentations each year, posed this question to his young audience: “How many stomachs does a cow have?”

Hands shot up in the air. The answers varied from one to four.

“It has one stomach. But inside that are four compartments,” Miller said.

He went on to explain the cow’s digestive process in which partially digested food from one of the stomach compartments is regurgitated as cud, which a cow chews on for hours.

Students learned the difference between Holstein and Jersey cows. Holsteins are black and white and produce about 15 gallons of milk per day, Miller told them. Jersey cows are brown and produce less milk, but it is creamier.

At the end of the presentation, a special treat awaited the youngsters. As they lined up to return to their classrooms, they got to pet Otis, a month-old Holstein calf.

Victor Valenzuela, a fourth-grade teacher, said the mobile classroom’s visit was a valuable learning opportunity for his students.

“It’s a real life experience for them,” he said.

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