

Checking out the campus cows

You could use the pH meter to test which was most acidic: milk, vinegar or coke. You could see whether your breath contained methane. You could find out what a freemartin is*, or how much the heaviest cow in Barn 1 weighs**. You could discover that the campus cows produce valuable data in addition to milk. And last but not least, you could go gooey at the sight of a new-born calf.

The Dairy Campus in Leeuwarden held an open day as part of Science Weekend. Some 450 visitors turned up, a lot less than the 1250 who came last time it was organized in 2019. The downpours probably had something to do with this.

But it was dry and cosy inside the barns. Researchers talked about their projects and let the visitors get involved where possible. For example, they were taught how to 'look a bovine in the butt', i.e. assign body condition scores. Visitors could also get hands-on experi-

ence with measuring methane and CO₂ in barn systems or learn more about the research on the relationship between diet and nitrogen emissions.

Of course, the dairy farm continued its regular business as well. The lactating campus cows looked for the milking robot or did their rounds in the milking carousel, the only difference being that they now had a lot of spectators. Another routine event at the dairy farm also went ahead: calf number 4419 was born that Saturday at 11:53, thereby giving visitors an insight into an aspect



Photo Marieke Enter

of dairy farming that is increasingly in the public eye, namely the relationship between milk, calf and cow. ME

* A calf from a multiple birth that is genetically female but also has some sexual characteristics of a male, is infertile and therefore unable to produce milk.

** About 850 kilos.