

JOURNEY OF
MILK
IN CANADA



Milk is stored
IMMEDIATELY in
a temperature
regulated bulk tank¹
(stored between 1°C and 4°C).

MQ

Storing milk in the bulk tank avoids
bacteria developing in the milk
while waiting for it to be picked up.

ON THE FARM

Cows are milked every day
(one to three times a day).



Milk from sick cows is kept
out of the bulk tank to
prevent contamination.

PICK UP



At each farm, the grader may reject the
milk if it's determined that it doesn't meet
strict food standards.

The grader takes samples to have
the milk quality tested in
a certified lab.

Milk is picked up by
a licenced milk grader
(every two days).

PLANT /
PROCESSING

TRANSPORT

MQ

Milk is tested again at the plant for
appearance and odour and to make
sure it's free from any antibiotics.

Milk is picked up from multiple dairy farms
before delivery to a processing plant.



Milk may be lost if an unexpected event like extreme
weather prevents transportation from farm to plant.
At the plant, milk is tested and rejected if it is
non-compliant (e.g., presence of antibiotics). If a
plant experiences unplanned processing
interruptions or needs to perform maintenance, milk
may be redirected to another plant.

Different amounts of cream are
recombined with milk to create
dairy products with a variety of
fat percentages.

The plant separates and processes raw
milk into an array of products and
by-products, which have a range of uses.

Once milk quality testing is
complete, milk is pasteurized.

Fluid milk is standardized,
homogenized and bottled, and
other milk batches are made into
dairy products (cheese, yogurt, ice
creams) which are then sent to
grocery stores.

MQ

Quality controls are carried out
throughout the bottling and
production processes.

CONSUMER

Products are delivered to local stores,
ensuring that the milk and dairy products
you purchase come from local farmers.

97%

Smart Supply, Less Loss

Canada's milk production closely matches consumer
demand, with more than 97%* of cow milk reaching
grocery shelves.

- ~2% is used on-farm or lost due to milk quality issues.
- ~1% of milk is lost for reasons related to transport (such as weather) or processing (such as plant interruptions or maintenance). By-products of processing may be repurposed as feed, fertilizer, or for biogas.

*Based on 2023-2024 data

MQ = Milk Quality

The National Dairy Code establishes best practices to ensure the safety and quality of milk production in Canada. Dairy Farmers of Canada developed proAction®, a national quality assurance program for the Canadian dairy sector. It is a mandatory program that ensures that milk is produced according to some of the highest standards in the world.

¹Bulk tanks are located in a separate, dedicated milk room to ensure proper hygiene and temperature control. Shown outside for illustration purposes only.