Dairy myths versus facts

Ten claims, set beside the record.

Some of the best dairy stories are true. Some are half true. Some are official wording that is easy to over-read. Each reply is drawn from a government release, a museum, or an official history.

The claim	What the sources actually say
The word vaccination is a modern laboratory coinage, invented far from any farm.	The Science Museum Group records that Jenner called his method vaccination, from *vacca*, the Latin word for cow.
Jenner simply invented the idea of using cowpox. No one around him already thought milkmaids were protected.	The museum's biography says Jenner knew the folklore that milkmaids seemed unmarked by smallpox, and wanted to prove a theory. He used cowpox material from Sarah Nelmes, and later tested James Phipps with smallpox.
Any female dairy animal on a British farm is, officially, a dairy cow.	In the United Kingdom 2025 figures, "Dairy cows are defined as female dairy cows over 2 years old with offspring." That wording is attached to that chapter, and is not automatically applied to England's 2026 table.
If you subtract England's dairy total from the United Kingdom's, you get a reliable official figure for the rest of the UK.	The UK figure quoted on the website is for 2025; England's is for 1 June 2026. They are different official records, and are not added or subtracted.
England's official cattle numbers are just another sample survey, with the same kind of survey error as other livestock figures.	The England release says cattle results come from the Cattle Tracing System, including all holdings with cattle, "so are not subject to survey error." Other livestock figures in the same release relate to commercial holdings in a survey.
Admiral Byrd took cows to Antarctica mainly because the men would otherwise have had no milk at all, and for no other reason.	The Polar Curator at Ohio State records Byrd's explanation — fresh milk — and then the "real reason," publicity, quoting Hanne Nielsen's paper on the golden Guernseys.
Iceberg, the expedition calf, was born at the South Pole itself.	The official History Corner account says the hope was a birth south of the Antarctic Circle; the calf was in fact born just north of it, and named Iceberg.
The decorative fountains in the Royal Dairy at Frogmore were only ornaments.	The custodian's official account is that water from a mermaid, a merman and a lady holding a jug ran constantly under the marble trestle tops, keeping the settling pans cool so cream could be skimmed.
Windsor's herd of 165 robot-milked Jerseys, sleeping on waterbeds, is a 2026 official farm statistic.	Those details appear in a royal.uk article written to mark the 65th anniversary of Queen Elizabeth II's Coronation. They are dated to that article, not treated as a 2026 census.
Mrs O'Leary's cow kicked over a lantern and started the Great Chicago Fire — as established fact.	The story is often retold. This sheet does not present the legend as fact.

ReallyByte — Fun. Educational. Useless. typographic sheet, no photographs. Sources and the longer wording are at dairy-cows.farmyard.im/myths/. Checked 17 November 2026.