



THE PATH OF MEMORIES

19 The dairy cows

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The **dairy cow** is the most important domestic animal – it provides meat but above all milk, a vital food in an age without refrigerators. In older times, almost all farms – even the smallest ones – had at least one cow and a few chickens for self-sufficiency. Some larger farms had room for more extensive animal husbandry, for example Norrbygård has around thirty dairy cows. After the Second World War, agricultural development progressed rapidly. Farmers began to invest in milking machines and tractors, but traditional manual working methods survived in our villages until the 1950s. The dairy cow is a mainstay of agriculture and an important source of income for many farms. In 1979, Märta Olsson, on the farm behind Bergby School, received a gold medal after delivering flawless milk for 23 years. From 1939 to 1979, she never had a holiday from the animals and carried at least 280 liters of water per day on her own.

hand up to the cows.

Weather is important to dairy farmers, and in 1943 a farm in Norrby became a **weather observatory** for SMHI. To this day, the farm still reports daily precipitation – meaning there are over 80 years of continuous weather data from Norrby.

The average precipitation during 1943–2005 is 594 mm/year. The highest precipitation is the rainy year 1960 with 840 mm. The record drought is it in 1947 with only 355 mm but also in 1955 and 1959 is very dry (the so-called wasp summers).

During the 2000s, profitability for dairy farmers deteriorated. More and more were forced to close their operations. At the turn of the year 2013/14, the last dairy cows disappeared. Today, only horses and beef cattle remain in Norrby, but traces of the village's long history in dairy production still remain.

Dairy cows in Norrby. Newspaper clipping 1979

