

Mr. Koichi Ito

Nikugyu Kobo Yuai Farm Ltd. Yubetsu Town, Hokkaido

It's a continuous process of trial and error. That gives it depth, and makes the work enjoyable.



Clear blue skies, and a sea breeze. Nestled among the slopes of low mountains, the cowsheds and pastures of “Nikugyu Kobo Yuai Farm”, managed by Mr. Ito and his family, unfurl across the land.

It is 6 a.m, and Mr. Ito has been taking care of the cowsheds since before the break of dawn. “I can tell how each one of my cows are doing every day, straight away.”

Currently, his herd contains around 1,350 cows, mostly of the Holstein breed. Mr. Ito's work varies according to the herd's condition; he might be tending to the pasture, or moving the herd across his farm. Every day is a continuous process of trial and error. “That gives it depth, and makes the work enjoyable.”

By the time everything is finished, it is past 7 p.m. In winter, the temperature plummets as low as minus 20 centigrade, and the blizzards can be so thick that it becomes difficult to open one's eyes. It seems to be Mr. Ito's deep affection for the cows, which prompts him to murmur soothingly to them, that provides him with the energy to overcome all these hardships.

Everything we do is for the production of safe, reliable beef.

Livestock feed of high quality and reliable safety is vital for raising healthy cattle. At Chikuren's designated farms, cows are only given purely plant-derived compound feed made with non-genetically modified ingredients, and are never dosed with growth hormones or antibiotics.

Mr. Ito has launched an initiative to produce corn for use as livestock feed, in coordination with a local farm . “At a time when grain supply has become difficult to secure worldwide, I want to increase our rate of self-sufficiency in feed materials, and also improve safety.”



In this rich natural environment, where the temperature difference between summer and winter can vary from 40 to 60 degrees, Mr. Ito pays daily attention to factors such as ventilation and protection against the cold to provide an environment for the cows to live in, free of stress. “Every aspect of this job is, for me, simply a part of my life since I was born,” he says calmly.

Everything he does is so that our customers can enjoy eating beef with full peace of mind. Mr. Ito's sense of responsibility for his work constantly drives him forward to tackle new challenges.

“Delicious!” The most rewarding word of all.

The greatest pleasure for Mr. Ito is to hear the words “tender and delicious” from those who eat his beef. “This job is my calling in life,” he says, breaking into a radiant smile.

It's been constant trial and error over 25 years. But even so, I love this job.



I've been doing this job for 25 years. Raising cattle is difficult work, so I spent the first five years in a total blur. I feel glad that I've become able to stop worrying so much, and not feel exhausted when it gets hard.

It's a continuous process of trial and error to raise healthy cattle, and to improve even more. Feed is the aspect I pay the most attention to. If the cows eat too much, it places strain on their stomachs.

I firstly give them dried pasture grass, and then afterwards give them grain-based feed. Although that means my work is doubled, by giving the grass first, I'm able to reduce the burden on the cows' stomachs.

The feed is non-genetically modified, purely plant-derived compound feed. That's all I use. Of course, I don't give them any growth hormones or antibiotics, either.

By doing things like installing two water troughs per block, and putting plenty of bedding on the floor, I take care to create an environment where the cows feel as little stress as possible. I also keep music playing in the cowsheds, you know.

I work 365 days a year, with no days off. I can't go on vacation. But I'm surrounded by amazing nature here, so every day feels like a holiday resort (Mr. Ota laughs).

There are hard parts, but when all's said and done, I do love this job. If I can eat my dinner surrounded by my family, including my grandkids, and find enough time to ride my beloved truck and motorbike, then I'm happy.



Every day is an accumulation of effort.

When we send the cows off, there's a special sense of achievement.



I raise calves from around one week after birth. The first six months of life are crucial for determining a cow's healthy development. While it's also possible to take on young cattle raised by producers of suckled calves, I wanted to try my hand at raising cows from calthood, by adjusting the amounts of milk and coarse feed I give them, and so on.

Calves are very delicate creatures, and tend to catch colds easily, so I take a lot of care in managing their environment. Tasks like vaccinating calves against diseases take time and effort, but there's always a special sense of achievement when the cows mature healthily and I can send them to their next destination.

That's because I believe that if cows are given feed that they enjoy eating, the customers who consume the beef will experience pleasure too. We cultivate the pasture ourselves, too. Every day is an accumulation of effort, affected strongly by the weather. As long as I do this job, the work is endless. Even so, I love it. That's what motivates me to do my best.

It can get as cold as minus 30 degrees in deep winter. I'm grateful to my wife, who helps me with my work. At the end of a day's work, she and I often have a light evening drink together. That's when I feel relaxed.

