***Questions to discuss:***

1. Do you think that the current beef and dairy industry is environmentally sustainable? Why/why not?

2. What do you think is the natural lifespan of a life a cow? How long do you think the average cow lives in Britain today? Why do you think their lives might be cut short?

3. Economic pressure encourages farmers to force cows to produce an artificially high yield of milk. How do you think they do this? What do you think are the consequences for the animals?

4. How long do you think calves stay with their mother after birth?

5. What do you think is the fate of these calves after being taken away from their mother?

6. Do you think all dairy cows have access to real grass?

7. Do organic dairy cows have a better life than conventional dairy cattle?

8. What health benefits does organic dairy have for humans?

9. Is there any kinder alternative to the current conventional and organic means of dairy production?

10. Is anyone campaigning for cows' rights?

11. How can you help?

***Some answers:***

1. NO! The livestock industry is one of the biggest sources of carbon emissions in the world. Beef production is the most significant reason for the destruction of the Amazon rainforest. The energy, land and resources used to produce meat and dairy is far less productive than those used for plant based foods.
2. Naturally cows live approximately 20 years, but they are often slaughter at the age of 5. When their milk yield starts to decrease they are no longer economically viable and so are seen as disposable.
3. Cows are artificially inseminated and forced to have on average one calf per year. They are pumped full of artificial hormones and high protein food. This means that cows produce an an unnatural quantity of milk which causes their udders to become swollen and tender and their legs to become deformed as they struggle to maintain their body weight. They are milked so intensely that they "dry up" at a younger age and are therefore slaughtered earlier.
4. Calves are usually separated from their mothers almost immediately: from a few hours to a few days following birth.
5. As unwanted by-products of the dairy industry, they are often slaughtered soon after birth and sold as meat for hunting hounds (this is the fate of around 200,000 new born calves per year). They may also be fattened over 6 to 12 months to be slaughtered for veal. As the mothers are not properly fed, the calves are often too scrawny to go on to be beef or dairy animals.
6. NO! Dairy cows in most conventional farms spend the majority of their lives indoors and are fed artificial high-protein feed. 13% of UK dairy farms are "zero-grazing" which means that cows never have access to outdoor grazing on real grass.
7. YES! Organic cows are impregnated less often, are fed organic feed, have access to grazing outdoors, are not pumped with milk-increasing hormones and have adequate space to live comfortably when kept indoors.
8. Organic milk is higher in Vitamins A and E, Zinc, Omega oils and essential fatty acids. Organic milk specifically can help prevent eczema, diabetes and Parkinson's disease. Lower levels of artificial hormones and chemicals means it can also help reduce the risk of allergies and fertility problems.
9. It is possible to keep cattle in such a way that all animals live full, happy and comfortable lives. With space to graze and socialise with one another, animals live in a natural setting, calves stay with their mother until they are weaned in a timely manner and bull are carefully trained to work the land. There is currently only one farm in the UK where animals fare so well, the Bhaktivedanta Manor Goshala. Unfortunately, the milk produced their only goes to feed the surrounding community and is not plentiful enough to also sell.
10. Ahimsa are looking to expand on this model of kinder dairy farming – one without slaughter and without the use of fossil fuels! Ahimsa are campaigning to make cruelty-free milk a reality by piloting a model of a working Ahimsa dairy farm and replicating it around the country until eventually cruelty-free milk is available on supermarket shelves.
11. Help Ahimsa achieve their goals. Join Ahimsa or take part in a fun fundraising event. The aim is to raise £150,000 to develop the first commercial cruelty-free milk. You can also make the pledge to only buy organic dairy, and go vegetarian. It makes a big difference.