



# What is forage?

## Grasses and legumes fed to animals in the form of:



**Pasture:** Cows harvest feed themselves by going out and eating grasses or legumes that grow in pastures.



**Hay:** Farmers cut grasses and legumes in the field, let them dry, and then bale them for feeding at a later date.



freshly cut crop before being put into silo



fermented silage as fed to cows

**Silage:** Farmers cut grasses and legumes, chop them while still moist, and put them in silos to ferment so they can be preserved (like the canned foods we eat).

Forages are especially important for ruminant animals like cows. They are the major source of the fiber which cows need to stay healthy. Forages, especially legumes, provide lots of protein, too.

## Is it a grass or a legume?

**Legumes** are plants that form seeds in pods, like peas. They have broad leaves and colorful, prominent flowers. They ‘fix,’ or make their own ‘fertilizer’ from nitrogen in the air. Generally they are higher in protein than grasses.

**Grass** plants typically have narrow leaves; hollow, jointed stems; and flowers at the top of the plant that become seed heads. Grasses are an excellent source of fiber for dairy cows.



red clover

Examples of legumes we eat include: peas, all kinds of beans, soybeans, and peanuts.



meadow fescue

We rarely see flowers and seeds on lawns because we mow the grass before they have time to form.



corn

*Corn is a grass, too!*

May copy for educational purposes.