# 10 Reasons Cows Need Forage

## 1. Provide Protein
Legume forages can provide up to 75% of the protein needed by lactating dairy cows; corn silage can provide up to 25%.

## 2. Provide Fiber
Forages are often the only source of fiber in a cow’s diet. Fiber is essential to slow the passage of feed, thereby increasing the amount of nutrients that the cow can absorb from the feed.

## 3. Maximize Intake
Forages stimulate cud chewing and rumination, which improve the cow’s appetite.

## 4. Provide Energy
Forages are also an important source of energy – especially corn silage which can provide up to 50% of energy needed in a cow’s diet. Alfalfa silage can provide up to 40%.

## 5. Minimize Acidosis
Acidosis occurs when excessive VFA production in the rumen causes cows to go off feed. Adequate forage and fiber greatly stimulate rumination (cud chewing) which buffers acids in the rumen.

## 6. Designed for Rumen
Cows were designed to eat forages. With their rumens working as fermentation vats, cows turn plants and byproducts that we can’t eat into foods we can.

## 7. Minimize Laminitis
Many times when cows develop acidosis, they also develop laminitis. Adequate fiber in the diet greatly reduces both.

## 8. Reduce Feed Costs
Forages are an economical source of protein, energy and fiber compared to most concentrates.

## 9. Good for Soil
With their deep roots and permanent ground cover, perennial forages help hold soil in place. They also increase the organic matter in soil, and legumes add nitrogen to the soil.

## 10. Sustainable
Perennial forages help protect the environment because they reduce surface water runoff and leaching of nutrients; they require less fertilizer; and they cover the soil year-round.