

Rumens Make Cows Special

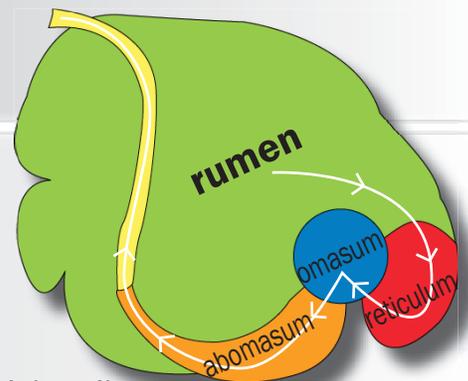
What is a rumen?

The first of 4 compartments in a cow's stomach. It is full of bacteria and protozoa that help the cow digest rough feed -- the kind we can't eat. The bacteria and protozoa are also a good source of protein for the cow to eat!

What is a ruminant?

Any hooved animal -- with a rumen, of course -- that digests its food in steps:

1. Chew and swallow the feed.
2. Regurgitate (bring back up) the semi-digested feed (cud).
3. Chew, swallow, and digest the cud some more.



Why do cows chew their cuds?

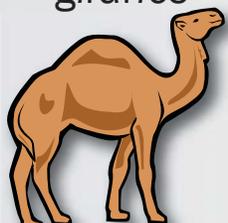
A 'cud' is food that a cow brings back up to chew some more. She will swallow food, digest it some, bring it back up to chew again, swallow and digest some more. . . until the food is ready to move on. This allows cows to use rough and tough foods that we could *never* eat.

This is so good I think I'll chew it again!



Ruminants include:

cows deer camels llamas goats antelope
sheep elk giraffes bison wildebeests buffalos



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U.S. Dairy Forage Research Center/USDA-Agricultural Research Service

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