

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 the field.



Hay

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



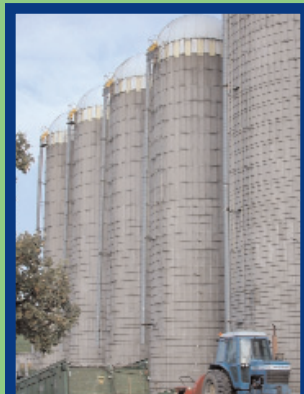
Silage

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

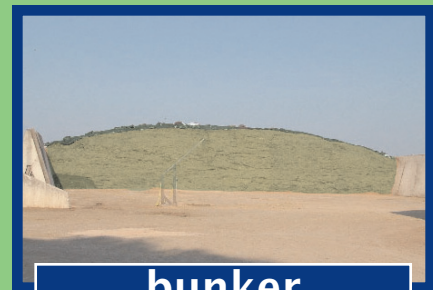
Different Types of Silos



**upright:
oxygen-limiting
glass-lined**



**upright:
concrete stave**



**bunker
(on the ground)**



silo bag

What's the Difference Between Legumes and Grasses?

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.

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

Grass plants typically have narrow leaves; hollow, jointed stems; and flowers at the top of the plant that become seed heads.

We rarely see flowers and seeds on lawns because we keep mowing the grass before they can form.

Legumes

(that are commonly fed to dairy cows)



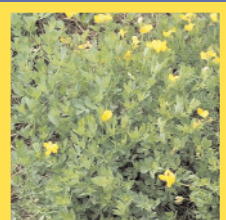
Alfalfa



Red clover



White clover



Birdsfoot trefoil



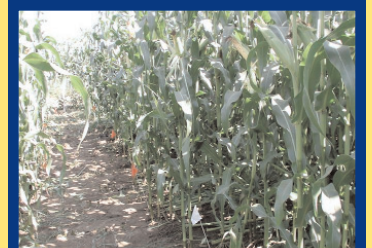
Mixed pasture legume/grass

Grasses

(that are commonly fed to dairy cows)



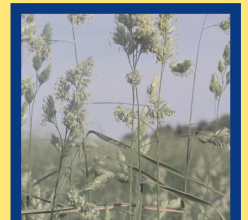
Reed canarygrass



Corn is a grass, too.



Smooth brome grass



Orchard grass



Meadow fescue

What Are the Most Common Dairy Forages?



Alfalfa hay and silage



Corn silage



Grasses for pasture

Why Are Forages Needed in a Dairy Cow's Diet?

Cows are 'ruminants,' designed to eat grasses and legumes that are high in fiber.

They need feed that is high in fiber to have normal 'rumen function' or digestion.

Forages also help cows meet their nutritional needs, especially plants such as alfalfa that are high in protein and calcium.

Alfalfa gives me protein and calcium for my body and to put in milk.



I get the protein and calcium I need when I drink milk!