

Why do buffaloes and cows only need to eat grass to get enough nutrients?

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We humans have to eat a lot of things to ensure adequate nutrition for our bodies, but buffaloes and cows only need to eat grass to live well, even get fat. Why is that?

Biologically, herbivores have digestive systems adapted to eating grass, so they can survive by eating only grass, including fresh grass and hay.



Cattle do not have an upper jaw, so they can only use their tongue to push grass into their mouth, then use their jaw to gnaw off the grass and then swallow it. This grass will be stored in the rumen.

Cattle are ruminants, so their stomachs have a special structure, with 4 compartments. The size of the rumen in adults accounts for more than 80% of the stomach, so its capacity is very large, up to 200 liters. When finished eating, cattle will lie down to rest and push the grass in the rumen up to chew again.

Thanks to the special structure of their stomachs, ruminants can digest cellulose, the main component of plant cell walls, which the human stomach cannot digest. The microorganisms in the rumen of cattle can break down the chemical structure of cellulose to 'synthesize' it into many other nutrients.

The beneficial bacteria in the stomachs of cattle and buffalo also help them digest agricultural by-products such as rice husks, hay, cereal hulls, etc.

Grass is mostly water, but inside its dry surface, there are water-soluble carbohydrates, proteins, fibres, oils, minerals and vitamins. So it is a complete diet: everything a cow needs is in the grass. What's more - it is supported by a special combination of four stomachs and powerful gut bacteria.

To enhance the benefits of the diet, many cattle farmers try to plant as much white clover as possible in their pastures (the top layer of soil covered with grass) to provide protein for their cattle. Furthermore, the nitrogen fixed by the clover from the air into the soil helps promote more sugary, energy-dense grasses like rye grass – improving the overall productivity of the pasture and the overall digestibility of the pasture.

The oils in grass contain polyunsaturated fatty acids (PUFAs), which are assimilated into the meat of the cattle and are very healthy to eat. These are Omega-3 and Omega-9 if you don't know.

In short, buffaloes and cows can only eat vegetables and grass and still be fat thanks to their stomach structure and the beneficial bacteria in their digestive tract.

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