

COW DIGESTION

The diagrams on the following pages have been simplified for class use and do not represent accurate locations of the digestive organs. Two diagrams are provided for your preference—one with labels and one without. Find a quick overview of digestion in a cow below (also greatly simplified).

1. Teeth—Food is chewed and swallowed.
2. Esophagus—Food is swallowed and sent to the stomachs.
3. Reticulum & Rumen (stomachs #1 & 2)—Food is broken down into large and small parts. The large parts stay in these stomachs and are slowly digested. Smaller food particles move on to the omasum.
4. Omasum (stomach #3)—Water and minerals are absorbed. The remaining food passes on to the abomasum.
5. Abomasum (stomach #4)—Some proteins and lipids are digested. What remains passes to the small intestines.
6. Small Intestines—Carbohydrates, proteins, and the remaining nutrients are absorbed.

Children may ask why the process is complicated compared to human digestion. The simplest answer is that grasses and feed require more work to get the best nutrients out of them. Human food is much easier to digest.



