

Vitamins are organic compounds necessary for normal metabolism and, thus, proper growth and development of each cow's organism. Vitamins do not provide energy, but cows cannot make use of other elements in their food without them (energy, for example). The most important vitamins for dairy cows are A, D and E (and all are present in, for example alfalfa and dandelions). Microbes in a cow's rumen synthesise vitamins from the B, C and K complexes (plants from the Leguminosae family and cereal grains contain vitamin B1, for example; many species from other families contain vitamin C, for example, fat hen, shepherd's purse, dandelions, mallow and plantains). Vitamin deficiencies cause different problems such as a loss of appetite, weight and sight, diarrhoea and weak offspring in the case of a vitamin A deficiency, whilst a lack of vitamin D causes rickets in growing animals and milk fever in cows that have just calved.

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