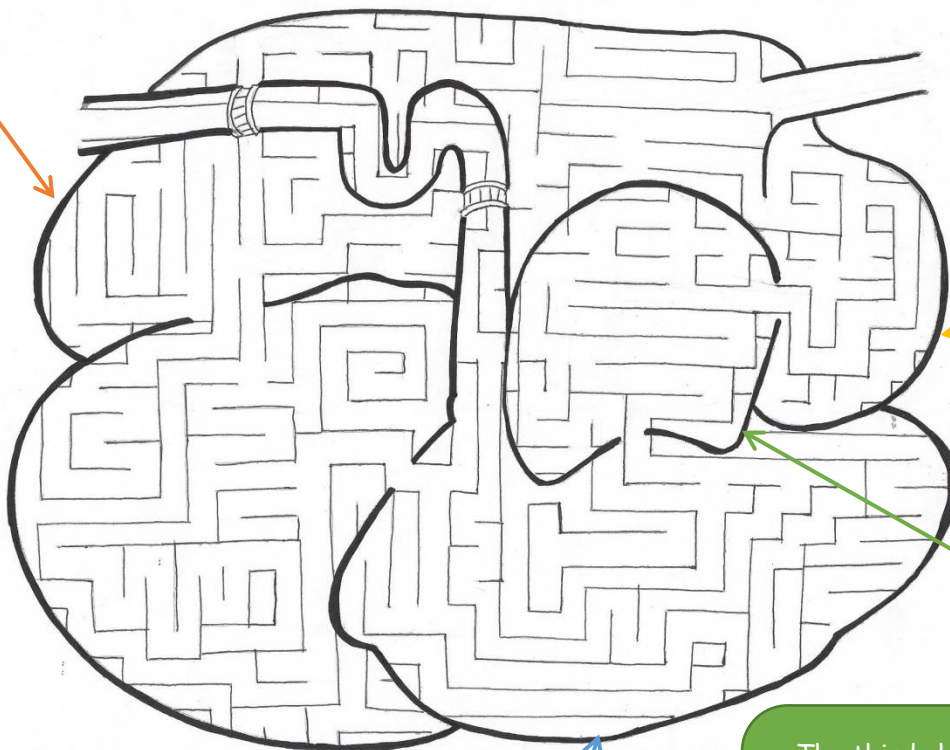


The Elk's Stomach

Elk are ruminants—hooved animals that have the ability to regurgitate and chew previously-swallowed food (cud). Elk are able to digest such rough materials, like that of bark and twigs, because they have a specialized ruminant stomach consisting of four unique chambers. Complete the maze below to learn about the four chambers of an elk's stomach.

The first stomach chamber involved in the digestive process is the rumen. The rumen acts as a storage area where swallowed food is stored until an elk can find a safe place to regurgitate and chew the cud. The rumen contains bacterium that begin to break down foods. Solid parts form the cud that is regurgitated while liquids are passed through the rumen.

The second stomach chamber is the reticulum. The reticulum is a honeycomb-like structure that traps larger, indigestible items and prevents them from entering the other stomach chambers. Items such as corn (elk cannot digest corn well) to small rocks are often found in an elk's reticulum.



The fourth stomach chamber is the abomasum. The abomasum takes the digested materials and breaks it up further to retain proteins. The proteins are then absorbed into the elk's body as nutrients.

The third chamber of an elk's stomach is the omasum. The omasum contains many folds that squeeze the water out of the food being digested. The water removed is then absorbed into the body.