

# Forage Factsheet – Cicer Milkvetch

Species Name: Cicer Milkvetch – *Astragalus cicer*

Origin: Eastern Europe

Longevity: 5-20 years

Uses: pasture

Optimal time of use: Cicer milkvetch begins growth approximately three weeks after alfalfa in the spring. Because of cicer milkvetch's prostrate growth habit, it is not recommended as a hay crop. Cicer milkvetch pastures may be grazed anytime during the early summer to fall.

Recovery after use: Cicer milkvetch requires a full growing season to recover from grazing.

Yield: Cicer milkvetch yields approximately 1475 lbs/acre (1676 kg/ha) in the Brown soil zone, 3795 lbs/acre (4312 kg/ha) in the Dark Brown soil zone, and 4660 lbs/acre (5295 kg/ha) in the Black and Grey soil zones. Recommended initial stocking rates are 1.3 AUM/acre in the Dark Brown, Black and Grey soil zones.

Palatability/Nutritional Value: Cicer milkvetch has reported digestibility values of 61.5% and crude protein levels of approximately 14.6% throughout the grazing season. Cicer milkvetch produces good quality late season pasture. Cicer milkvetch does not cause bloat or accumulate selenium.

Competitiveness: Cicer milkvetch is competitive once established.

Winter Hardiness: Cicer milkvetch has good winter hardiness.

Drought Tolerance: Cicer milkvetch is moderately drought tolerant and goes dormant during periods of drought.

Erosion Control: Cicer milkvetch's creeping rootstocks are effective at soil stabilization.

Ease of Establishment: Cicer milkvetch is difficult to establish. A high percentage of hard seeds and low seedling vigor results in extended establishment times. Cicer milkvetch seeds will continue to germinate for up to three years after they have been planted. Newer cultivars have greater seedling vigor. Do not use a cover crop when seeding cicer milkvetch. Scarify seed prior to planting.

Suggested Mixtures: Meadow brome grass, bunchgrasses.

Salinity Tolerance: Cicer milkvetch has low salinity tolerance.

Flooding Tolerance: Cicer milkvetch withstands saturated soils for approximately one week in the spring. It does not tolerate flooding.

Soil Texture: Cicer milkvetch is adapted to all soil textures but produces best on coarse soils. It requires approximately 15.7 inches (400 mm) of annual precipitation. Cicer milkvetch produces well on sites with shallow water tables.

Acidity Tolerance: Cicer milkvetch tolerates soil pH as low as 6.0.

Management Considerations: Allow adequate time for establishment (1-2 growing seasons) before use.

Source: Saskatchewan Forage Council, 2007.  
Dryland Forage Species Adaptation CD.