

Milkvetch

There are several species of milkvetch in Uinta County.

The members of the Milkvetch genus (*Astragalus*) all have a characteristic sweetpea-like flowers, ranging in our area from white to purple or pink. The legume fruit pods vary greatly in size, length, color and the amount of hair covering them. Some of the inflated pods can be very intriguing with their red-streaked coloration, and can 'pop' under your feet when stepped on. The leaves of most species in our areas are pinnately compound with few to many leaflets.

Many *Astragalus* species contain high levels of nitro-compounds. Some species in this genus are also called Locoweed and have the same poisonous affect on livestock as some members of the closely related *Oxytropis* genus. Other species are poisonous because of the large amount of selenium they accumulate from the soil. Cattle will eat some species even when other forage is abundant, but sheep and cattle are both susceptible to poisoning.

Not all species are toxic however and parts of some *Astragalus* species have been used for centuries for medicinal purposes and as a dietary supplement.

