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Students Compete in Eastern Colorado State FFA Range Judging Contest

By: Ben Berlinger, CO Section of the Society for Range Management

On October 2, 2019, high school students from across the eastern part of Colorado competed in the State FFA Range Judging and Plant Identification contest in Seibert, CO. The Range Judging Contest is one of many Career Development Events (CDE's) FFA students can participate in to test their skills and knowledge learned through their agricultural education classes.

Through the Range Judging Contest, students are tested on their plant identification skills and reading the landscape to determine the ecological site, condition of the rangeland, amount of usable forage, and number of animals that can be supported on the land. There were 213 FFA students representing 23 FFA chapters who participated in this event. Students were divided into three groups to identify 40-50 different range plant species and two ecological sites. During the plant identification portion, students had 60 seconds to identify the plant before moving on to the next plant. At the two ecological sites, students had 40 minutes to complete a rangeland inventory to determine the ecological site, condition of the site, and a range management scenario that was provided and required the students to recommend the best range/grazing management practices. Judging the two ecological sites also tested the students plant identification skills.



Students completing the rangeland inventory, site condition, and range management scenario on the Overflow ecological site.

Awards, provided by the Colorado Section of the Society for Range Management (SRM), were presented to the highest scoring individuals. The high scoring team awards were presented by FFA District Officers. **Braden Wedel**, Stratton FFA Chapter, was the highest overall scoring individual for the combined site judging and plant identification. **Josh Waller**, Hoehne FFA Chapter, was the second highest overall scoring individual. **Braden Wedel** was also honored with the highest score on the plant identification exam of the event. For the FFA Advanced teams: 1st gold and State Champion - **Lone Star**, 2nd gold - **Branson**, 3rd silver - **Kim**, 4th silver – **Rocky Ford**, 5th bronze - **Fowler**, 6th bronze – **Stratton**. The FFA Beginning teams: 1st gold - **Hoehne**, 2nd silver - **Branson**, 3rd bronze - **Rye**

Thank you to all the FFA Advisors, CO FFA Foundation, bus drivers, local Conservation Districts, the Colorado State Land Board and the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service for helping make this event a success for all the participating high school students. A special thank you goes out to the **Witt family ranch** for allowing us to use their rangeland and access for this educational youth event.



Braden Wedel accepts his recognition for highest individual achievement from the CO Section SRM Youth Activities chairman Ben Berlinger



Congratulations go to the Lone Star FFA Chapter; 2019 FFA State Range Judging 1st Gold and State Champion.