

**By Jan Schultz**

***The Imperial Republican***

An Imperial FFA team of two freshmen and two sophomores captured the Nebraska state range judging junior division title, then went onto the Old West Regionals and brought home fourth place.

In his first year as an FFA co-advisor here, Jeremy Vlasin was thrilled with the team's performance.

And, he hopes it has a trickle-down effect.

"What I want them to get out of this is that if you are willing to put in the time and effort, you'll experience success, in all things," Vlasin said.

"To me, that's more of a success than winning the state championship," Vlasin said.

He said a strong work ethic was evident among the FFA range judges early in the school year.

Since the second week of school, the team practiced four mornings a week, showing up at 7:15 a.m. They also put in two Saturdays from 8 to noon prior to the contests.

The state championship team included sophomores Steven Fish and Michaela Ketter, and freshmen Spencer Hartman and Callin Ledall.

At the state contest Sept. 30, Hartman was the runner-up in the individual scoring in the junior division and Fish placed fifth.

Then at regionals held Sunday in Glendive, Mont., Fish finished sixth, Ledall was seventh and Hartman, eighth, in individual standings.

What's even more impressive with Imperial's fourth place team and top 10 individual placings at regionals is that all FFA members there compete in one group.

There are no separate junior and senior divisions at regionals like the FFA state contest.

"Our team was a young team in the mix (at regionals), so that's kind of exciting for the future," Vlasin said.

In the range judging contest, FFA members are tested on their knowledge of plants, range condition and how stocking of animals affects rangeland.

In two aspects of the state contest, contestants had to identify 24 plants, and then determine the soil type on a particular piece of range ground and in what condition it was.

A third section involved a stocking rate problem, and they had to determine if the rancher should increase, decrease or keep the number of animals on it at the same level. Given a map, they then had to determine what actions could be taken to improve the range.

Lastly, they were given a general test on Nebraska range and range plants here.

There are four FFA members on a team, with the top three scores used for the team total.

At regionals, Vlasin said the contest was basically the same, but since it was in Montana, there were different plants to learn and identify.

Some plants, although they were the same as Nebraska's, went by different names in Montana, which the contestants were required to know. They also had a plant anatomy test at regionals, which wasn't part of the state contest.

And, the Imperial FFA team had just two days to prepare for regionals, after winning the state contest just three days earlier.

Vlasin said Imperial FFA teams only go to regionals if they win a state championship. That last happened in 2004.

Randy Vlasin, a former Imperial FFA advisor at Chase County Schools, assisted his son by working with the FFA members on the map and stocking rate problems. He attended practice one day a week.

Jeremy Vlasin said his dad offered to help, and the first-year teacher/advisor didn't have to think twice about accepting.

Here are complete results from the Imperial FFA district, state and regional range judging competitions.

Districts Sept. 23

Senior Division, Top 15%—Charlie Haarberg.

Senior Division, 4th Place overall—Tyler Roenfeldt.

Junior Division, Top 15%—Adam Moline, Perry Vetter, Hunter Spady, Jenna Schilke, Callin Ledall, Spencer Hartman.

Junior Division, 9th Place—Michaela Ketter.

Junior Division, 6th Place—Steven Fish.

Third Place District Team—Steven Fish, Michaela Ketter, Cody Cravey, Spencer Hartman.

State Sept. 30

Senior Division, Top 15%—Tyler Roenfeldt.

Junior Division, Top 15%—Hunter Spady, Cody Cravey, Callin Ledall, Michaela Ketter, Chantal Heathers.

Junior Division, 5th Place—Steven Fish.

Junior Division State Runner Up—Spencer Hartman.

State Champion Junior Team—Steven Fish, Michaela Ketter, Spencer Hartman, Callin Ledal.

Old West Regionals Oct. 4

Fourth Place Team—Steven Fish, Callin Ledall, Spencer Hartman, Michaela Ketter.

Individually— 6th Place, Steven Fish; 7th Place, Callin Ledall; 8th Place, Spencer Hartman.