



Last week, 20 Imperial FFA students made the long trip to Stanton, in northeast Nebraska, to compete at the State Range Judging Competition Sept. 26.

Students competed in a junior and senior division. Seniors are those students in grades 11-12 and juniors are those students in grades 9-10. An estimated 50 teams from around the state competed in each division.

Imperial's senior team of Justin German, Callin Ledall, Spencer Hartman and Mason Holmes finished as the sixth place senior team.

German, Hartman and Ledall all individually finished in the top 25 percent, with German breaking into the top 10 individuals.

In the junior division, the team of Mindy Castle, MaKenna Ketter, Jessica Hartman and Darin Knobbe finished 10th overall.

Castle, Ketter and Hartman all ribboned in the top 25 percent.

"I felt all the students did the best job they could with the information they had. I was very proud of them," said FFA Advisor/Coach Jeremy Vlasin.

Students left Tuesday morning before school in order to get to the practice site and competed on Wednesday. Students are provided with a practice site before every state competition, Vlasin noted.

"The purpose of the practice site is to allow students the opportunity to see the different types of plants that grow in different regions of the state. Many plants that grow in northeast Nebraska do not grow in southwest Nebraska and vice versa," said Vlasin. Students spent about three hours at the practice site on Tuesday afternoon.

Vlasin said he felt fairly confident walking away from the practice site on Tuesday. The students put a lot of time and effort into learning the new plants that they don't have the opportunity to see here in southwest Nebraska.

Unfortunately, the practice site was staked on silt-based soil and the competition was staked on sandy soil.

"When they drove us out to a pasture with a sandy-based soil I knew that the students could pretty much throw out everything they had learned at the practice site on Tuesday," Vlasin said.

"It was already going to be a challenge judging in a completely different region of Nebraska but not having the practice site and competition site match up added even a greater challenge for our students. They did their best, that's all I could ask," he said.

The FFA range judging competition is comprised of five parts, all focused on proper range management.

The most basic component of the competition is plant identification. Twenty-four plants are staked that students must identify.

Determining range conditions is a second aspect. Students determine what type of range site they are on according to the soil profile, topography and plant community. After that's determined, they must estimate the condition of the plant community there.

A third part of the competition includes a ranch problem, in which students receive a scenario

and must determine the best management decisions to make for the given scenario. They also must determine if the rancher in the scenario has his/her pasture stocked correctly with livestock, taking into account the amount of available forage that the rancher has in the pasture.

The competition concludes with a 10-question test on general range management knowledge.