



ND FFA Association

RANGE JUDGING

CDE Handbook

Purpose

The purpose of the Range Judging Career Development Event is to develop students' understanding of North Dakota's rangeland ecosystems and their ability to make informed land management decisions. Through this event, students gain hands-on experience in identifying plant species, evaluating ecological sites, calculating similarity indexes, and assessing rangeland for both livestock production and wildlife habitat. Participants build their knowledge of sustainable range management practices and improve their skills in observation, analysis, and decision-making. This event aligns with the Agriculture, Food, and Natural Resources (AFNR) Cluster Skills and Career Readiness Practices, preparing students for careers in rangeland ecology, conservation, and agricultural sciences.

Objectives

The Range Judging CDE is for participants to demonstrate their ability to:

- a. Identify ecological sites and evaluate the similarity index of plant communities.
- b. Assess rangeland conditions for beef cattle forage value, stocking rate, and habitat suitability for sharp-tailed grouse.
- c. Recommend range improvement and habitat management practices based on field observations and scenario maps.

Rules

The North Dakota State Range Judging contest is designed to encourage, and assist interested persons in learning about the range resource in North Dakota. It requires knowledge of range plants and knowledge of plant characteristics such as longevity, origin, season of growth, and response to grazing and requires the individual to evaluate the resource for livestock production, wildlife habitat and site integrity.

This contest is sponsored by the Society for Range Management, North Dakota Chapter, with assistance from other interested agencies, organizations, and individuals.

The contest is held annually, usually the third weekend in September. The first State Contest was held in Beach, North Dakota in 1976. The contest location is selected by the Education Committee, North Dakota Chapter, and Society for Range Management, Extension/4-H and the State Agriculture Education staff. This contest will be held in the different areas of the state, rotating to give students exposure to various ecosystems.

North Dakota FFA Association – Artificial Intelligence (AI) Policy

The North Dakota FFA Association adopts and adheres to the National FFA Organization's official AI Policy in full. All North Dakota FFA members, chapters, advisors, and state staff are expected to follow the guidelines set forth by the National FFA Organization regarding the appropriate and responsible use of artificial intelligence (AI) tools in FFA activities, competitive events, and academic work.

For the complete and current National FFA AI Policy, including detailed guidelines on appropriate use, please visit:

🔗 <https://ffa.app.box.com/v/NFFAAIPolicy>

Questions regarding this policy should be directed to the North Dakota FFA Association state office.

General Format

1. Registration opens the day before the contest and practice sites are provided for review.
2. Practice sites will be set up and available for review by teams and individuals prior to the contest. Contestants, coaches and others will have the opportunity to judge the practice sites and then discuss them with the contest official at the site on the day prior to the contest. Practice sites will include site keys and plant lists. Typical plant species will be flagged for identification practice, and approximately 100 X 100 areas clearly flagged for determining ecological site, similarity index, evaluation for use by grouse and beef cattle and identification of improvement practices recommended.
3. Contest instructions will be given by an official prior to the start of the contest. 5 sites (may be shortened to two if inclement weather) will be judged in the contest with 20 minutes allowed per site.
4. Lunch in some cases will be available for a small charge or pack your own lunch.
5. Results and awards will be given following tabulations and an explanation of the official scoring of the contest.

The contest shall consist of five sites – 3 ecological sites and 2 plant ID sites;

1. Ecological sites – each should be approximately 100 x 100 feet. At each site contestants will:
 - Determine ecological site
 - Determine similarity index
 - Evaluate resource for beef cattle
 - Evaluate resource for sharp-tailed grouse
 - Determine range improvement practices for beef cattle or sharp-tailed grouse

2. Plant Identification – Fifteen plants will be flagged at each site. Contestants will name the plant (see the plant list in the Range Judging Handbook for accepted plant names) and identify the life span, season of growth (for grasses only), grazing response, plant origin, and ecological and resource rating for food or cover for sharp-tailed grouse and beef.

All plants selected for identification will be named in the contest plant list. Only names shown on the plant list will be acceptable.

The Official resource for the contest will be the “Range Judging Handbook for North Dakota” (DDB-628) available from county extension offices or the NDSU Ag Communications, Distribution Center, Morrill Hall 7, Box 5655, NDSU, Fargo, ND 58105-5655. 701-231-7883

Scoring the Contest

The numbers below correspond to sections of the range-judging card.

Ecological Site Identification	10 pts.
Similarity Index	15 pts. if site ID is correct or 5 pts if site ID is not correctly identified
Sharp-tail Site Evaluation	
Nesting Cover	
Plants	10 pts
Height	5 pts
Habitat	10 pts
Protective Cover	10 pts
Beef Site Evaluation	
Forage Value	10 pts
Degree of use	10 pts
Distribution Factors	
Slope	5 pts
Grazing Restraints	6 pts
Stocking Rate	5 pts
Beef Management Practices	3 pts each correct answer
Sharp-tail Management Practices	3 pts each correct answer
Plant ID	10 pts per plant (3 for name, 1 for each characteristic if the name is correct.)

In case of tie scores, the total score of all sites, Part V – Plant ID, will be used as the tie breaker.

Contestants will compete in one of four divisions: 4-H, FFA, Open and Adult.

4-H Division – refer to State 4-H office rules.

FFA Division – Open to all FFA Members in good standing within their chapter. All members of a team must be members of the same chapter. One team per chapter is eligible for State Awards. Additional teams or individuals may enter the Open Division.

Open Division – Open to individuals and teams without regard to organizational membership or age. May include postsecondary range teams or individuals.

Adult Division – Open to any Adult or collegiate individual including Advisors – individuals only.

Team Competition

A team will consist of three to five members. The three highest scores will be used to calculate the team score.

Individuals not members of a team must register to compete in the Open Division or may enter the 4-H or FFA division providing the school does not have a team in that division. No contestant may simultaneously compete in more than one division.

The first place individual in any division shall not be eligible for further competition within that division in following years' contests. Members of the first place teams in regional range judging competition shall not be eligible to compete in that same division of the North Dakota state contest. Persons placing first individually in any division of regional range judging contest shall be ineligible for further competition in that same division in the North Dakota state contest.

General Rules

Judging cards and guides to determine range condition will be furnished. Pencils and clean, unmarked clipboards are the only materials that contestants will be permitted to carry during the contest. Contestants are not permitted to touch flagged plants or walk through the area designated for range site, condition and degree of use determination during the contest. Violations of these provisions may result in contestant's judging cards being picked up and scored 0 for that site. Talking is not permitted during the contest.

Contestant's judging cards will be returned following scoring, however, results announced at awards are final. All cards will be double checked in the scoring process to insure accuracy. A summary score sheet showing all individual and team scores will be furnished to each team coach after the contest.

Awards

4-H Division and Open Division – Ribbons and/or trophies or plaques will be presented to the first, second and third place teams, and to the top ten place individuals. A special award will be given to the High Individuals.

FFA Division – Gold, Silver and Bronze Awards will be given as furnished by sponsors through the North Dakota FFA Foundation. A special "Baby Bison" award and \$250 stipend will be presented to the FFA High Individual. State plaques and rosettes will be presented to gold chapters, and silver or bronze rosettes to other teams. A traveling trophy and travel stipend from ND FFA Foundation to attend either the regional or national range event will be awarded to the high team. The High team will also take possession of the revolving trophy for one year.

Overall High Individual – An award will be presented to the overall high individual from the 4-H and FFA Divisions. This will be the "Top Hand" award. Previous winners of this award will not be eligible for this trophy in subsequent years even though they may still be eligible to compete in some division of the contest.

Contest rules and procedures may be changed by the contest sponsors as is needed. Announcements the day of the contest take precedence.