

Information to Assist with Preparing for and Hosting a State Range Judging Contest

Your county has been selected to host the Nebraska State Range Judging contest. In Nebraska, the range judging contests are a cooperative effort between the Society for Range Management, University of Nebraska Cooperative Extension, Natural Resources Districts, Natural Resources Conservation Service, and many others. It is an activity that is highly regarded by Ag Ed instructors across the state.

The first step you will need to do is to **form a contest committee**. This committee should include a UNL extension educator, a NRCS conservationist, and an employee of the local Natural Resources District. You are also encouraged to add other resource professionals to assist you with planning the contest as needed. Members of the State Range Judging Committee are available to answer questions and assist you through this planning process. Those members have assisted with multiple contests and can help you ensure all the details of a contest are covered.

Once you have formed a committee, you will need to **select the date for the contest**. To avoid conflicts with other contests, you should plan to hold the contest on the last Wednesday of September, with the contest setup and practice site on Tuesday of that week. If these dates do not work, please communicate with the State Range Judging Committee Chair to ensure that you don't overlap with other contests students will be involved in.

You will need to **select both a contest site and a practice site**. These sites should be ungrazed if possible, or grazed very early in the growing season to allow adequate plant species vigor at the time of the contest. These two sites should have similar plant species and range sites, but be a fair distance apart to ensure that schools at the practice site don't know where the contest site is located. These sites also need to be native rangeland (not seeded or CRP) with a fairly high diversity of grass, forb, and shrub (if possible) species. You should also consider travel distance from the registration location to the site and also proximity to motels. It is also important to make sure that busses and vans can access the sites easily. Your local committee member from NRCS will be helpful in determining contest locations. The contest location will need to remain confidential within the State and local committees so an advantage is not given to local schools that may compete.

The **registration site** will also need to be chosen. This site will need to be large enough to hold around 400 students, have a separate room for scoring and tabulation, and have adequate restroom facilities for a large number of people. This site will only be used the day of the contest, but it may be helpful to have access to it the afternoon prior to the contest to set up registration and the score room. This site may also be used for early registration the afternoon/evening prior to the contest where instructors can pick up directions to the practice site and a key for the practice site. However, this activity may be better to have at the local NRD or NRCS office to allow for staff to conduct office duties while waiting for teams to arrive in town.

One final site selection that the local contest committee needs to make is a **location for the State Range Judging Committee meeting**. This meeting will be the evening (usually from 7:00 to 10:00 pm) the night before the contest. This space only needs to be large enough for approximately 12 people.

The State Range Judging Committee will assist with the contest and practice site setup. They will bring all of the flags, station signs, flagging, clippers, and other materials needed to set up the contest. It is helpful if a few local resource professionals with some plant identification skills are available to take the State Committee to the sites and assist with setup. The State Committee will also write the ranch problem and the 10 questions for the contest.

Registrations will be taken locally. You are encouraged to set your preregistration deadline right at 1 week prior to the contest. This will allow you to make the appropriate numbers of copies. You will need to decide what the registration fee will be, keeping in mind that \$2 per contestant will be paid to the State Range Judging Committee. Generally, a total registration fee of \$4 to 5 is common, and will help the local committee cover the costs of facility rentals, copies, etc.

You will be provided with a template to adapt locally for taking registrations. You will also receive a sample letter cover letter to send as well. Once you have this assembled, you will need to send this to ____ at least 1 month prior to your contest date. The registration information will then be sent out to all ag teachers in Nebraska.

The **Range Judging Handbook and Contest Guide**, UNL Extension Publication EC150 is available online at www.ianrpubs.unl.edu. There are guidelines for holding an area and state range judging contest that can be found on pages 33 to 41. This will be a good resource for you to review.

Materials to be supplied by the State Range Judging Committee:

Contest cards (2 of Card I and 1 of Card II per contestant plus extras)

Ribbons and other awards

Scoring program (contestants will need to be entered into this program as registrations are received, as this provides the contestant number and group)

Copies of contest materials to be made locally: It is not necessary, but it is helpful if you use different colors of paper.

Ranch problem – 1 per participant plus 20 extras

Station 9 questions – 1 per participant plus 20 extras

Guide for determining range condition (for the appropriate precipitation zone) found on pages 10-14 of Judging Handbook – 1 per contestant

Worksheet for determining range condition found on page 21 of Judging Handbook – 3 per contestant and stapled to the guide above – make 20 extra packets

Contest help required: (*generally a member of the State Committee)

Contest Official*

Scoring Official*

Site Leaders (8)*

Group Leaders (8)

Timer

Runners (4)

Scorers (minimum 25)

Registration helpers (2-4, can then help score)

Supplies provided locally:

Red pens

Calculators

Radios/walkie-talkies

Laptops with Excel (2 or 3)

Printer(s)

Sound system for registration/awards site

Sound system for contest site

Card stock for copying contest keys

Exacto or utility knives for cutting keys

Cash (approximately \$50-60) to make change the day of registration