

Young Montana Rangemen Shine in Competition

John Lacey and Harold Strobel

The Ninth Annual Old West Regional Range Judging Contest was held in Glendive, Mont., on September 10 and 11, 1984. This activity was originated in 1976 by the Society for Range Management and the Old West Regional Commission to improve knowledge of rangeland resources.

Although the Commission was disbanded in 1979, this popular event has been continued by the SRM and volunteers from land management agencies, ranchers, universities, and private industry. More than 1,150 youth have participated during the 9 years. Their ages have generally ranged from 14 to 18 years.



Vegetation and range site diversity make Makoshika Park an excellent place for a range contest.

South Dakota hosted the first event. During subsequent years, it has rotated annually between Nebraska, Wyoming, Montana, North Dakota, and South Dakota. The second go-around will be completed when North Dakota hosts the 1985 event.

Each host tailors the outdoor classroom and contest to its environment. Participants at the 1984 event spent the first day reviewing range sites, identifying plants, estimating utilization, determining range condition, and calculating stocking rates. Instructors were Mike Carlson and Lynnel Hoffman of the Soil Conservation Service, Bill Volk of the Bureau of Land Management, and Mark Turner and Charles Peterson of the Cooperative Extension Service.

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Kenny Nemitz, member of Dawson County Range Committee, monitors activities at "utilization plot" during the contest.

During the Contest, held on the second day, contestants identified 25 range plants and described their ecological characteristics, identified three range sites, estimated range



Members of Montana's 4-H team (from left to right, Todd O'Hair, Ty Taylor, Craig Taylor, John Lacey (Coach), and Paula Knierim) studied before the contest.

utilization at one site, estimated range condition and calculated a stocking rate at another site, and made management recommendations by interpreting a range map. Several ranchers from the Dawson County Range Committee monitored the contest and assisted with scoring and tabulation.

Montana youth captured the highest two places in both individual 4-H and FFA scoring. Montana teams also took 1st and 2nd places in 4-H and FFA team judging. The top three teams in the two divisions were:

FFA Teams	4-H Teams
Harlowton, MT	Montana State Team
Cascade, MT	Judith Basin Co, MT
Beach, ND	Mead Co., SD

Montana's success in 1984 was not unexpected. From a historical perspective, Montana youth have ridden away with most of the trophies:

First Place Team Standings

Year	4-H	FFA
1976	Bozeman, MT	Lemmon, SD
1977	Bozeman, MT	Cody-Kilgore, NE
1978	Bozeman, MT	Cascade, MT
1979	Bozeman, MT	Malta, MT
1980	Bozeman, MT	Winifred, MT
1981	Bozeman, MT	Cascade, MT
1982	Cody-Kilgore, NE	Sargent, NE
1983	Bozeman, MT	Malta, MT
1984	Bozeman, MT	Harlowton, MT

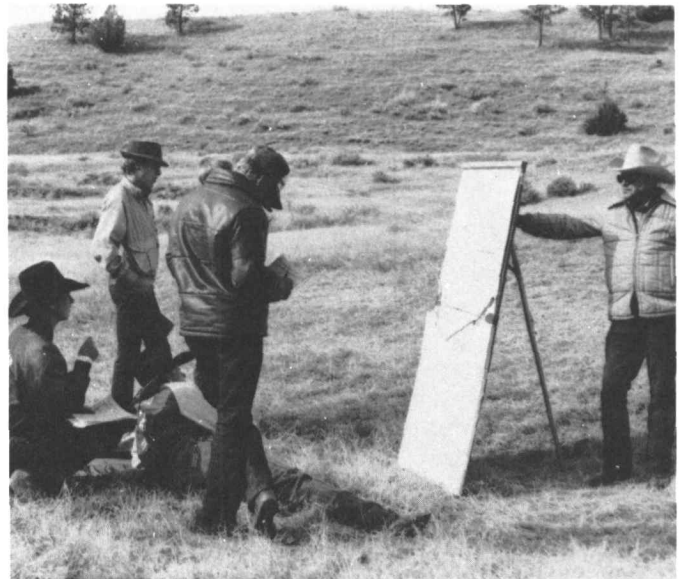
Overall High Individual (4-H and/or FFA)

Year	Individual
1976	Ken Redman (MT, 4-H)
1977	Roger French (MT, 4-H)
1978	Lamae Cornwall (MT, 4-H)
1979	Mary Beth Holzer (MT, 4-H)
1980	Lisa Stands (MT, 4-H)
1981	Larry Berg (MT, FFA)
1982	George Nollette (NE)
1983	Brant Young (MT, 4-H)
1984	Norma Berg (MT, FFA)

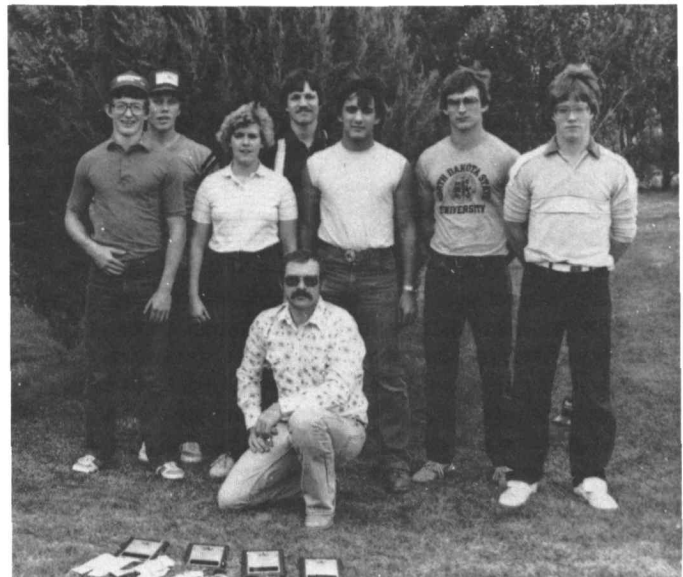
Thus, during the 9-year period, Montana teams have placed first 8 times in 4-H and 6 times in FFA competition. In 8 of the 9 years, a Montanan has also been the highest scoring individual.

Montana's success in the contest should not be attributed to home-pasture advantage. Instead, several programs and many individuals deserve credit for Montana's success in the contest. Montana youth can study range at age 9 or 10 in the 4-H range project. By the time they are 14, they have had four years experience in plant identification, range utilization, and range site and condition determination. Their skills are further refined by FFA teachers who emphasize range management in their agriculture programs.

In addition, all Montana youth are encouraged to attend Range Days, Youth Range Camp, or some other youth range activity. While financial support for the Youth Range Camp is provided by Montana's Department of Natural Resources and Conservation, most of these activities are sponsored by the private business community and supported by individuals who contribute their own time and energy. A few of the individuals who have been instrumental over the years are:



Neil Melrose, member of the Dawson County Range Committee, monitors activities at "ranch planning" station during the contest.



Doug Vannurden, and his FFA teams from Beach, North Dakota were plenty tough!

Sam Short (SCS), Clair Clark (BLM), Bob Ross (range ecologist), and ranchers John Hollenback, Chuck Pluhar, Tom Demars, Bob Jones, Taylor Brown, and Willie Milliron.

The 1984 contest was sponsored by Glacier Park Company (Miles City, Montana), DOW Chemical, Dawson County Ag Committee, and the Society for Range Management (International Mountain and Northern Great Plains Sections). Their contributions were used to purchase awards and defray contestants' lodging and meal expenses in Glendive.

The Tenth Annual Contest will be held in southwestern North Dakota, in September, 1985. It will be another opportunity to increase awareness of range management and evaluate the overall effectiveness of the youth range programs. For further information, contact Paul Bultsma at Dickenson, N.D. (phone: 701-227-2546) ●