

## FFA Students Compete Well at Western National Rangeland Event

Fifteen FFA chapters and 68 high school students from across Idaho, Nevada, Utah and Washington tested their knowledge of rangeland management in the Western National Rangeland Career Development Event, November 11 & 12 in Elko, NV.



FFA member, Logan Ballard, from Wells, NV was named "Top Hand" taking first place and winning the coveted silver buckle. Other top individuals include Kinley Whitmarsh – Hagerman, ID (2<sup>nd</sup>), Jacob Flick – Gooding, ID (3<sup>rd</sup>), and Bryce Pose and Ryan Nelson (4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup>) – Hagerman, ID. Team awards recognized Hagerman FFA, ID (1<sup>st</sup> Place), Wells FFA, NV (2<sup>nd</sup> Place), and Gooding FFA, ID (3<sup>rd</sup> Place). Top Rookie teams from Green Canyon, UT and Omak, WA were also recognized.

"This career event is designed to mimic standards commonly used in the rangeland management profession. Students get hands-on experience with skills and scenarios they may encounter later as working professionals," said Dr. April Hulet, rangeland extension specialist at the University of Idaho. Rangelands comprise nearly half of western North America, making their proper use and management vitally important to communities and economies in western states.



"There are far more jobs than students who graduate with professional range degrees. This is a great profession and we want to identify students who want to work outside to manage these lands for wildlife, livestock, or to restore rangelands and perhaps manage fuel loads to reduce wildfire risk," said Dr. Paul Meiman, rangeland professor at the University of Nevada-Reno.

The event was coordinated by the Western National Rangeland Education Association dedicated to raising awareness of career opportunities in rangeland conservation and management. Sponsors of the event included the Idaho Rangeland Resources Commission,

Idaho Section Society for Range Management, Public Lands Foundation, and rangeland degree programs from the University of Nevada-Reno, University of Idaho, and Montana State University.

Students competed for awards by learning to identify 81 common rangeland plants, measuring vegetation attributes for livestock and wildlife habitat, calculating an appropriate stocking rate, considering grazing management options and estimating the cost of habitat improvements. “The event really prepares students with rangeland skills including real world math,” noted Emily Hale, a Bureau of Land Management (BLM) employee who assisted the team from Omak, WA.



Several rangeland professionals joined students in the field to describe how the skills they have learned are put into practice. Representatives from natural resource agencies and organizations, including the BLM, Forest Service, and Elko County, described their job duties. Universities offering rangeland degrees, including the University of Nevada-Reno, University of Idaho and Montana State University helped students explore college degrees that lead to careers on the range. Learn more about the event at [www.wnrcde.org](http://www.wnrcde.org).