



Views from VanDeWalle

Brandy VanDeWalle, Extension Educator in Fillmore/Clay Counties

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Future Agronomists at Work

In 2013, I had the opportunity to observe a crop scouting competition conducted by Iowa State University and was fortunate to garner financial and organizational support to bring the program to Nebraska in 2014. Since that time, a group of states including Iowa, Nebraska, Indiana, Kentucky, Minnesota, and Illinois have hosted contests and have been able to allow youth to experience crop production in other states.

The purpose of the competition is to provide students an opportunity to learn crop scouting and principles of integrated pest management (IPM) for corn and soybeans in Nebraska, to obtain knowledge and skills that will be helpful in future careers and to demonstrate newer crop scouting technologies.

On September 18, 2023, five states competed at the eighth annual Regional Youth Crop Scouting Competition at the Eastern Nebraska Research, Extension and Education Center near Mead, Nebraska. Teams of youth participated by completing nine crop scouting exercises in field plots. This educational, hands-on program provided students an opportunity to learn crop scouting and principles of integrated pest management (IPM) for corn and soybeans, obtain knowledge and skills that will be helpful in future careers and to demonstrate newer crop scouting technologies.

The top two teams from Nebraska, Iowa, Illinois, Minnesota and Indiana qualified for the competition. Extension faculty from Nebraska, Iowa, Minnesota and Illinois served as judges for the program and tested the teams' knowledge on the basics of scouting corn and soybean fields. This included crop staging; looking for patterns of crop injury; disease, insect and weed identification; precision ag exercise; cover crops, etc.

Results from the 2023 competition were as follows:

- First place — Iowa team Clayton County #1: Ben Gibson, Amelya Weigand, Keaton Klingman and Jacob Schilling.
- Second place — Nebraska team Colfax County #2: Callen Jedlicka, Cody Jedlicka, Daphne Jedlicka and Justin Eisenman.
- Third place — Indiana team Cascade FFA: Will Thompson, Zach Benter, Adryanah Hendershot, Ethan Tames and Evan Fishel.
- Fourth place (tie) — Nebraska team Colfax County #1: Josh Eisenmann, Rylan Nelson and Hayden Bailey; and Iowa team Clayton County #2: Mindy Keehner, Henry Reimber, Cora Keehner and Carter Hillers

Also participating was the Indiana team of Heritage Hills FFA Chapter with Megan Steinmetz, Riley Steinmetz, Dani Beier, Trenten VanHorn and Owen Foertsch. From Illinois was Wesclin FFA with Camren Ferri, Michael Anderscavage, Lilly Biggs, Cole Friederich and



Carson Richter, and Pontiac FFA with Jared Bressner, Brock Clement, Chancey Haas, Cole Rapp and Landen Wilson. Rice/Dakota County from Minnesota consisted of Nick Bayer, Molly Albers, Garrett Ostermann and Lucas Deplazes, and Sebeka FFA with Mindy Keehner, Henry Reimber, Cora Keehner and Carter Hillers.

More information about the crop scouting competition is available online at [CropWatch](#). Click on the link "Crop Scouting Competition".

This program was sponsored by the Nebraska Independent Crop Consultant Association, Nebraska Soybean Board, Ward Laboratories and UNL's Doctor of Plant Health Program in collaboration with Nebraska Extension. For more information about the program, please contact [Brandy VanDeWalle](#), Nebraska Extension educator, at (402) 759-3712.