Making his debut in Phillips County during what happens to be Colorado Weed Awareness Week is new county Weed and Pest Dept. supervisor Wilbur Strickert.

A native of Yuma, he took over the position on Monday, July 6 from former supervisor Chris Ness.

Strickert attended the University of Wyoming, majoring in rangeland ecology. Upon graduation in December of 2007, he worked in Springfield for a couple of years as a weed and pest manager through the conservation district.

Four months ago, he thought he would try working in the small town of Farson, Wyo., but found the area was not for him. When he heard about the job opening in Phillips County, he leaped at the opportunity to return to northeast Colorado.

For right now, Strickert and his wife Jessica are living in Yuma. Depending on where she finds a job, he hopes they can soon move a little closer to Phillips County.

In their spare time, Wilbur and Jessica enjoy refinishing antique furniture and fishing.

Governor Bill Ritter has proclaimed July 12-18 as Colorado Weed Awareness Week. Commissioner of Agriculture John Stulp encourages landowners in Colorado—whether they own 5,000 acres or one—to inspect their land for noxious weeds.

“It is essential for all Colorado communities and landowners to work toward common weed control objectives if we are to succeed at protecting and restoring Colorado’s productive agricultural lands and natural ecosystems,” said Stulp.

Noxious weeds are defined as non-native, invasive plants that can dominate and often cause permanent damage to natural plant communities. If not eradicated or controlled, noxious weeds will jeopardize the health of public and private lands and the myriad of activities that occur on them.

Weeds cost Colorado landowners an estimated $100 million annually in lost productivity of range and crop land, and noxious weeds have infested more than one million acres in Colorado. Federal agencies estimate that noxious weeds are spreading on federal public lands at a rate of 4,600 acres per day.

To protect Colorado’s lands, the Colorado Department of Agriculture has implemented an aggressive program to manage weeds, with an emphasis on early detection and eradication. The department has helped communities form partnerships and coordinate weed management activities; and the State Weed Coordinator has distributed $350,000 annually in grants to assist counties, municipalities and others in their weed management efforts.

Since starting in Phillips County, Strickert said he has noticed thistle, both musk and Canada, as being the most abundant noxious weeds. However, other plants on the county’s noxious weed list include field bindweed, jointed goatgrass, Russian, diffuse and spotted knapweeds, leafy spurge and silver-leaf povertyweed.

Phillips County Weed and Pest offers site visits as well as a spot spray program. This program is for all private landowners and renters. The county supplies the operators and equipment, while the landowner pays for chemicals.

The Weed and Pest crew also monitors and spot sprays along county roads and railroads.

Those who suspect they may have a noxious weed problem are urged to call the Phillips County Weed & Pest District office at 774-7453.