

Dec. 21, 2016

NCTA, SDSU partner for Aggie dairy degree

By NCTA News Service

Curtis, Neb. – Nebraska residents can start college classes in dairy production beginning in August at the Nebraska College of Technical Agriculture in Curtis through a partnership with South Dakota State University.

Leaders at NCTA and SDSU announced the new program which can lead to NCTA's Associate of Applied Science (AAS) degree with a concentration in Dairy Production.

"We are pleased with this creative partnership that combines first rate, hands-on teaching facilities at both institutions to allow our students to get the practical experience they need to successfully enter into the dairy industry," said NCTA Dean Ron Rosati.

Students will take animal science, agronomy, ag business and ag mechanics courses for three semesters at NCTA, and intensive dairy production courses for one semester at SDSU.

"We appreciate the opportunity from SDSU to allow Nebraska students access to their excellent free stall barns, milking parlors, milk processing labs and other dairy infrastructure," Rosati said.

The SDSU College of Agriculture and Biological Sciences partnership with NCTA's Division of Animal Sciences and Agricultural Education will help meet production needs faced by the region, said Interim Dean Daniel Scholl.

"We are so pleased that this strategic partnership with NCTA will help provide production agriculture with highly trained graduates heading into exciting careers," Scholl said.

The new venture came about after the Nebraska Department of Agriculture and State Senator Jerry Johnson, then chairman of the Legislature's Agriculture Committee, asked Rosati if NCTA would help the state prepare for an expanded dairy industry and growth initiative in Nebraska.

Industry and student requests for a dairy program then prompted discussions at SDSU, which maintains a production dairy herd with dairy manufacturing and food science research programs.

Neither NCTA nor the University of Nebraska-Lincoln had maintained commercial dairy herds.

"We are very pleased to integrate NCTA students into our Dairy Science program at SDSU," says Vikram Mistry, Professor and Head of the SDSU Dairy and Food Science Department. "The dairy industry in this region is very dynamic and growing rapidly. With this new partnership we will be training the future leaders of the dairy industry. We look forward to welcoming NCTA students to SDSU."

While NCTA operates a 600-acre farm and student beef cattle herd along with horses, swine and other livestock, the Aggie campus has not had an operating dairy herd or facilities since the campus served as a high school more than 50 years ago.

"We will readily modify our existing livestock management, animal science, nutrition and reproduction courses that NCTA is known for in the beef cattle industry and apply those courses to dairy science students," said Doug Smith, chairman of the NCTA Animal Science and Agricultural Education Division. "Our recruiting starts today for students interested in studying dairy science."

The curriculum at NCTA includes courses such as animal management, introduction to animal science, ag economics and marketing, nutrition, large animal diseases, farm records, artificial insemination, ration formulation, farm and ranch management. The SDSU semester will feature introduction to dairy science, introduction to dairy cattle breeding and evaluation, dairy cattle operations, two labs, and possibly an internship. NCTA tuition and fees will apply at Curtis, and SDSU tuition and fees applied when at Brookings. The AAS degree will be conferred by NCTA.

“SDSU has the unique combination of providing dairy production (farm) and dairy manufacturing (processing plant) programs,” added Dr. Mistry. “Thus, NCTA students will have the opportunity to be engaged in the complete spectrum of the dairy industry, from farm to product.”

Nebraska agriculture and economic development leaders have been aggressively recruiting both dairies and processing facilities to the state.

Information is available by contacting NCTA’s animal science or recruiting office at 1-800-3-CURTIS, or see <http://ncta.unl.edu/dairy-production>. Read this article at: <http://go.unl.edu/qzje>



Students at the Nebraska College of Technical Agriculture can now study dairy science at Curtis and at the South Dakota State University dairy program at Brookings. (SDSU photo)

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NCTA.Dairy.12.21.16