

January 2, 2018

Dean's Column by Ron Rosati, PhD

NCTA vet techs, healthy animals

A profile of our award-winning Veterinary Technology Systems Division at the Nebraska College of Technical Agriculture is the final installment of a 4-part series about the campus.

The NCTA veterinary technology program was one of the nation's first nationally accredited programs for technical training in health care for livestock, companion animals, and exotics.

During its long history, the quality of the program has been exceptional and it continues to grow today. Our VTS division has been continuously reviewed and accredited by the American Medical Veterinary Association since the early 1970s.

From cattle to llamas, dogs to exotic birds, and horses to gerbils, many species provide NCTA students varied experiences and hands-on learning in state-of-the-art facilities. New laboratories, classrooms, animal housing, dog kennels, and an outdoor aviary were added in recent years to the existing Veterinary Technology Complex and the Walter Long Veterinary Teaching Clinic.

In addition to in-depth learning on campus, veterinary technology students gain real-world experience at internships during their final semester of a 2-year program. Students have internship experiences at veterinary clinics, research facilities, animal shelters, or in livestock facilities. Some students gain international experience through an annual travel adventure with the Safari Club. During this holiday break, six students and two sponsors will explore the world of exotic animal care in Costa Rica.

The VTS Division features five Associate of Applied Science Degree options: Veterinary Technician, Veterinary Assistant, Animal Husbandry, Animal Health Management and Equine Health. VTS technician option graduates are eligible to sit for Veterinary Technician National Examinations and become licensed professionals. Becoming a licensed veterinary technician is analogous to becoming a registered nurse except that a veterinary technician focuses on animal health while a nurse works in the field of human health.

A 1-year certificate in animal health care or laboratory animal care is also available. Required courses for each VTS option may be found here: <https://ncta.unl.edu/academic-programs>. Veterinary technology students generally take an intensive curriculum which includes courses in nursing, anatomy, radiology, pharmacology, anesthesia, hematology, surgery prep and much more.

Additionally, students enrolled in the A to B program may earn a Bachelor of Science degree through the transfer option to the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. This program is designed to help students transfer the maximum number of credits from the Curtis campus to the Lincoln campus.

Barbara Berg, LVT, is chair of Veterinary Technology Systems, and coordinates faculty who teach approximately 20 courses each year. In addition to Berg, faculty members are Ricky Barnes, DVM, Judy Bowmaster-Cole, LVT, and in January Darcy Moreland, DVM, joins the faculty. Additionally, NCTA

alumna, Josi Arnold, LVT, is Lab Assistant and Office Associate, and Curtis veterinarian, Steven Krull, DVM, serves as adjunct faculty, as well.

Nearly all classroom lectures are matched with a laboratory component to provide students with hands-on, experiential learning opportunities. The NCTA program in large animal veterinary technology has been listed among the Top 10 in the U.S. due to student exposure to the variety of food production livestock, horses and other large species.

“Our animals are on campus here, with our students caring for them and working with them in teaching programs on a daily basis,” Professor Berg notes. “We don’t have to get on a bus and go elsewhere. Our animals are right here, housed inside the complex or on the campus farm.”

NCTA veterinary technology facilities include a full surgical suite, an amphitheater which overlooks the surgery rooms, six x-ray rooms, anesthesiology facilities, a clinical pathology laboratory, a necropsy lab and multiple additional lab facilities. Extensive facilities allow students to maximize their hands-on time with animals and equipment.

All students rotate through practical husbandry experiences during which they have responsibilities for taking care of the wide range of animals available in the veterinary technology program. On a daily basis, often early in the morning, students are responsible for all aspects of animal care including feeding, exercising, grooming, and cleaning. They care for animals ranging from dogs and cats to horses, a 10 foot python, lizards, sugar gliders, rodents, macaws, ferrets and many other species.

Student organizations which are sponsored by the Vet Teach division include Stock Dog Club, Safari Club, and Student Technicians of Veterinary Medicine Association. The Stock Dog Club partners with a regional group, the Outback Stock Dog Association, in hosting working dog clinics and trials at the NCTA indoor arena.

The division hosts continuing education each year for veterinary technicians and veterinarians from throughout Nebraska and surrounding areas. NCTA works closely with the Nebraska Veterinary Medical Association, and also partners with the Omaha Equestrian Foundation for an educational booth at the International Omaha Expo.

For details about NCTA Veterinary Technology, contact Professor Berg at bberg2@unl.edu.



Surgical training at NCTA veterinary technology.