The year of 2021 was both successful and eventful at the Aggie campus of the Nebraska College of Technical Agriculture. Here’s a brief recap of the first six months:

January – NCTA resumed in-person classes on January 11, 2021, with campus health and safety at the forefront. Dr. Larry Gossen, in his second semester as NCTA dean, worked closely with Associate Dean Jennifer McConville, and University of Nebraska-Lincoln administrators on health protocols and screening procedures. NCTA was the pilot site for non-invasive COVID-19 screening with saliva testing that would be used throughout the year at UNL and NCTA. The quick test was administered to all on campus at the Student Union, then in following weeks given at Ag Hall and continued twice a week through the semester for traveling teams and those who participated in group activities on campus (such as FFA events, student tours, and Discovery Days). If tests were positive, McConville spearheaded the quarantine and safety program privately with the affected students, staff, or faculty. Members with Collegiate Farm Bureau were able to attend the Young Farmer & Rancher Conference in Kearney, and Livestock Judging Team traveled to Sioux City for a contest. The Stock Dog Team hosted its first public trial of 2021 at the Livestock Teaching Center. NCTA outreach and student participation at the Nebraska Cattlemen Classic in Kearney enabled excellent dialog and Aggie exposure.

February – With COVID-19 screening and sound health protocols in place, NCTA was able to host visitors at campus for many more events in 2021 than previously. A school group from Perkins County toured campus to learn about agriculture and veterinary technology programs. FFA Leadership Development Events were at campus, and NCTA observed FFA Week with Collegiate FFA hosting some fun activities. NCTA outreach and student participation at the Nebraska Cattlemen Classic in Kearney enabled excellent dialog and Aggie interactions with youth and partners in the livestock industry.

Spring calving of the NCTA cow herd involved livestock management students signing up for calving rotations from late February through March. Responsibilities included delivery assistance, if needed, weighing, tagging and record-keeping experience, and reports to instructors. NCTA observed Career and Technical Education Month, emphasizing the hands-on opportunities and $100,000 state CTE grant the college received for expanded technology resources on campus. Directors and board members with the Nebraska Association of County Extension Boards met at NCTA and toured campus.

March – Visitors came to campus the first Discovery Day of 2021 on March 2. To end the week, NCTA Crops Judging Team hosting nine colleges from 2-year and 4-year campuses for a judging contest. The Aggies won the 2-year division. Animal Science had its AI school for cattle breeding which draws Aggie students and is open to the public. The NCTA Stock Dog Team co-hosted a public trial with the Regional Outback Stock Dog Association. Popular horse trainer, Sherman Tegtmeier, returned to campus for a two-day clinic in horsemanship and reining. Women in Ag hosted a meet and greet at the Ed Center.
April – As weather improved for travel, Aggie competition teams were able to attend regional and out-of-state contests. Livestock Judging, Aggie Rodeo, Ranch Horse Team, Shotgun Sports, Crop Judging and Stock Dog Team represented NCTA. The RH Team’s “Punchy in Pink” Horse Show resumed at the Red Willow Fairgrounds after a hiatus in 2020 due to COVID-19. Campus events in April included the second in-person Discovery Day for Spring, 2021. NCTA organized a Horticulture Club open to all students. Elie Madsen, freshman Veterinary Technology student from Maxwell, is president. Faculty advisors are Judy Bowmaster-Cole and Dan Stehlik. New Student Enrollment was April 20, drawing many high school seniors and juniors. Animal science and Farm Crew students branded spring-born calves on April 30.

May – Twenty-six students from 2019-20 and 2020-21 were inducted into NCTA’s Alpha Iota Tau Chapter of Phi Theta Kappa honor society in a ceremony on May 5. That evening, at a pre-graduation Student Awards program, freshman Melody MacDonald of Fullerton was named Aggie of the Year. For the first time in many years, graduation was outdoors, south of Ag Hall on the old football field. Commencement speakers were NU President Ted Carter, Vice President Mike Boehm, and Regent Bob Phares. Tiffany Dickau, an Elwood native, was class valedictorian and salutatorian was Addison Villwok of Randolph. Dr. Boehm, who also is vice chancellor of the NU Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources, announced a significant gift of the 2,147-acre Frank B. and Mabel Leu Memorial Ranch in Hayes County given by Sandra (Leu Clark) and David Scholz, will be a teaching and experiential learning ranch for Aggie students. NCTA hosted the Standard of Excellence Livestock Judging Camp May 26 and Animal Science Discovery Day May 27. Students could stay overnight at one of the NCTA residence halls and gain a glimpse of college.

June – NCTA also was the site the next week for the statewide Nebraska Youth Range Camp. We hosted a one-day New Student Enrollment for prospective students to register. The eight-week summer session for two dozen Veterinary Technology students started June 14. Nathan Burnett represented Aggie Rodeo in saddle bronc riding at the College National Finals Rodeo in Casper. NCTA attended the Nebraska High School Rodeo Finals in Hastings with Recruiter Rulon Taylor and Aggie Coach Jaden Clark meeting with prospective Aggies. The Aggie Alumni Day on Saturday, June 26 brought nearly 90 alumni and their guests to campus. Aggie Alumni Scholarships were announced for Allison Wilkens of Gibbon and Morgan Preston of Wright, Wyoming.

Aggies return
Students will be returning from their holiday break to their homes in Curtis and on campus for the start of Spring Semester classes on Monday, January 10. High school students interested in dual credit coursework in these courses which also begin January 10, have until January 14 to enroll in the class. See details at: https://ncta.unl.edu/dual-credit-and-agricultural-academies

Next week, we will look at Part 2 of the NCTA Recap for 2021. Meanwhile, stay warm out there and safe travels to our Aggie family.

NCTA Campus Events:
Jan. 10: NCTA Second Semester begins

Part of the University of Nebraska system, the Nebraska College of Technical Agriculture is a two-year institution with a statewide mission of preparing students for successful careers in agriculture, veterinary technology and related industries. NCTA is known for its affordable tuition, high job-placement rate for its graduates, and for the success of student teams in competitive activities including crops judging, ranch horse events, livestock judging, shotgun sports, stock dog trials, and intercollegiate rodeo. The college is consistently ranked as one of the best two-year schools in the nation.

Online article: https://go.unl.edu/vhcz