



NEBRASKA COLLEGE OF TECHNICAL AGRICULTURE

Oct. 20, 2020

Hands-on from classroom to farm

NCTA Dean's Message by Larry Gossen, Ph.D.

Experiential or "hands on" learning here at NCTA undergoes the true test of farm and ranch work.

In the first eight weeks of classes, our animal science students gained experience in pre-conditioning and weaning calves from the campus cow herd.

Veterinary technician students who may be unfamiliar with large animal care or livestock such as cattle, sheep or swine, have gained experience and built confidence, in working around a bucket calf, VT professor Libby Fraser, DVM, reports.

Hands-on techniques for the NCTA vet tech students may include taking a temperature, monitoring respiration rate, and digestive process of the small calf. The work is a gradual introduction to safely handling livestock and caring for animals outside of the Vet Technology facilities where students may be more familiar with caring for dogs, cats, and small pocket pets.



Advanced welding course students have been rebuilding steel pens at the NCTA feedlot. (Stehlik / NCTA photos)

In May, Alan Taylor, assistant professor of animal science and nutrition lecturer, stepped into a new role as the NCTA Experiential Learning Coordinator. He oversees our teaching resources around campus for livestock, crop land, pastures and farm facilities.

In this capacity, Alan is responsible for making sure that our Aggie students and faculty have the necessary resources for their coursework at the college, in addition to preparing for other teaching activities on the ag campus or NCTA farm.

These duties include livestock for FFA and 4-H livestock judging events, coordinating equipment and resources for agronomy field days with Nebraska Extension, and for public seminars or clinics conducted with our partners in agricultural commodity organizations.

Like most faculty at NCTA, Alan wears multiple hats. He has served as the coach of the NCTA Aggie Shotgun Sports team since its inception. He also is the supervisor who hires work-study students and employees for our NCTA farm crew. We rely on his master's degree in animal nutrition, certainly, plus his expertise in ranch ownership and management.

In addition to managing the NCTA crop land, equipment and budget at the college, Alan also directs feeding and care for the 30 beef cows in the campus herd, 30 feedlot calves which were weaned and are now on feed, and five school-owned horses (two for vet tech and three for animal science). We plan to add meat goats to the livestock inventory as well, yet this fall.

An upcoming course for 16 Aggies will tap into livestock requests as Doug Smith, animal science professor, coordinates an ABS beef cattle artificial insemination class this Friday and Saturday. During the past two months, experiential learning has been on display at the campus feed lot where the advanced welding students of instructor Dan Stehlik have completed construction of two of the cattle pens. The students bring the portable equipment and supplies from the welding laboratory to the campus feedlot where they gain between 4-6 hours of hands-on experience.

Taylor and his "farm crew" of student workers and farm manager Roy Cole had started the renovation project this summer, tearing out the four feedlot pens and replacing all of the concrete, feed bunks and now the steel pens.

The final welds were completed on the pair of pens two weeks ago, with another pair to be completed before additional cattle are added to the feedlot. We'll look forward to sharing the revamped facilities next summer as NCTA resumes public events and is able to welcome large-group tours.

For the interim, be assured that the NCTA Aggies are staying busy in classes both indoors and out through our strategic experiential education offerings.

NCTA Events:

Oct. 23-24: Vet Tech Continuing Education, NCTA Education Center

Oct. 24-25: John Holman Stock Dog Clinic, LTC, NCTA

Oct. 30: NCTA Trunk or Treat for community, Ed Center Parking Lot

Oct. 31-Nov. NCTA Stock Dog Trial, 8 a.m., LTC Arena

Nov. 7: NCTA Shotgun Sports Clay Shoot, Curtis Gun Club, 8 a.m.

Nov. 10: NCTA Discovery Day, 8:30 a.m., Ed Center

Nov. 11: Salute to America's Veterans

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 numerous 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/sj74>