



NEBRASKA COLLEGE OF TECHNICAL AGRICULTURE

Sept. 9, 2021

Aggie studies reinforce FFA goals

By Mary Crawford, NCTA News

CURTIS, Neb. – Throughout two decades of being around cats, dogs, horses, goats and cattle, Melody MacDonald is certain her future involves beef cattle and animal health care.

This fall, the Fullerton, Nebraska native has returned as a third-year student at the Nebraska College of Technical Agriculture, studying veterinary technology with an emphasis in large animal health.

She will complete her courses in March, leave for an 8-week internship, and graduate in May with the class of '22.

As NCTA wrapped up its 2020-21 college year last May at awards night, MacDonald was named the school's Aggie of the Year.

"When Dr. Gossen started talking about the person, I thought 'that doesn't sound anything like anyone I know' so I was surprised to hear my name." MacDonald shared later.

NCTA's Dean Larry Gossen recited contributions and campus highlights of the Aggie of the Year, who is nominated by faculty and staff. Gossen presented MacDonald with a plaque.

In her first two years, MacDonald was juggling a rigorous load as a "vet tech" who also took a few animal science classes, competed on the NCTA Livestock Judging Team, and was a Student Ambassador welcoming visitors and giving campus tours.

Last spring, at semester, she added more responsibility as a Resident Assistant in a campus residence hall.

Gossen described MacDonald as an ideal representative of the student body: dependable, dedicated, enthusiastic, trustworthy, and unique.

Unique because usually, when a student is in the veterinary technology program, there is little time for a dual emphasis on a competitive, traveling team.

Dual Aggie focus

Livestock judging involves early-morning team workouts on evaluating livestock or practicing oral reasons. Add in the time for travel to collegiate contests, many of which are weekends out-of-state.

"I'd be one of few, if not the first, to make it through two years of livestock judging while taking a fulltime load in vet tech," MacDonald says.

She'd set lofty goals during her years at St. Edward High School where she was active in FFA, vocal music, cheerleading, student council, and mentoring 7th-grade students.

There was no question on aspirations to pursue interests in agriculture and livestock.

“NCTA had been on the map for a long time,” she said. “I love the small-town aspect and the hands-on learning. Everything I need is right here on campus so it’s all pretty amazing.

“I’d wanted to do livestock judging in college for a long time. I’d talked with Dr. Smith before I decided to take vet tech. I’m glad I was able to judge, and I’ve completed that goal.”

“At first I was a bit timid. I am completely done now. For me, it was being confident in looking at the livestock and being sure of what I wanted to say in oral reasons and how I wanted it to come out. I was confident in my actions and explaining my reasons for selection.”

Opportunities in FFA

High school FFA enabled many leadership and life skills as she served as chapter president, secretary, and parliamentarian.

Career development included: public speaking, livestock, range, and land judging programs, most for six years; veterinary science projects for four years; Nebraska State FFA Convention from 7th through 12th grades, and once to Indianapolis for National FFA.

She is applying for her American Degree and hopes to return to Indianapolis to receive that in 2022.

For the past two summers, MacDonald worked at the Spencer Veterinary Clinic, gaining experiences in the professional setting, and primarily assisting two veterinarians with large animal work.

NCTA has prepared her for a career in agriculture.

“I plan to work in a veterinary clinic, with large animals, and to have cattle of my own someday.”

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.



Photo 1



Photo 2

(Caption 1)

NCTA Dean Larry Gossen congratulates Melody MacDonald as the 2020-21 Aggie of the Year. (NCTA photo)

(Caption 2)

Melody MacDonald of Fullerton is a veterinary technician student at the Nebraska College of Technical Agriculture. She was named 2020-21 Aggie of the Year. (Photo courtesy of Melody MacDonald)

Online article: <https://go.unl.edu/cmd2>