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By NCTA News

NCTA hosts camp for young animal scientists

CURTIS, Neb. – Swine, cattle, sheep, poultry, horses, grasslands and livestock judging had top billing for youth this week at a judging and animal science camp in Curtis.

Nearly 160 youth and adults attended the 12th annual Youth Animal Science Field Day on Thursday at the Nebraska College of Technical Agriculture, said Frontier County Extension Educator Kathy Burr.

Many excited youngsters had arrived at the NCTA campus on Wednesday for the Standard of Excellence Livestock Judging Camp, then stayed overnight in college dormitories. The judging camp was coordinated by Doug Smith, chair of the NCTA Animal Science and Agricultural Education Division, and NCTA livestock judging team coach.

Activities were hosted by the NCTA Livestock Judging program and 33 individuals with Nebraska Extension staff, leaders and adult volunteers, Burr said.

“Youth ages 8 to 18 traveled with groups from several different Nebraska counties and Colorado to attend the event,” Burr said. “Activities focused on various aspects of livestock production.”

Participants gained important life skills in seven workshops taught by animal science teachers. Topics included: Low Stress Cattle Handling & Psychology, Exploring Animal Science Careers, Swine Evaluation and Handling, Livestock Quiz Bowl, Grazing Management with Prescribed Burning, Equine Psychology and Safety, Feeds and Feeding, Sheep Care 101, and Poultry Judging.

In an educational track for older youth, they explored animal science topics in depth, including exposure to animal science careers and college programs at the University of Nebraska-NCTA in Curtis, and the University of Nebraska College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources in Lincoln.

All the youth rotated through the seven stations which were designed to be learning experiences in a fun, relaxed atmosphere, Burr noted.

“My granddaughter really had a great time today. On the ride home, I received a comprehensive report, which was all really good,” reported one participant’s grandmother. “Seriously, I couldn’t get a word in edgewise until we hit the McCook city limits when she wrapped up by saying “Best Day Ever!”

The event was a fun opportunity for youth to learn more about the livestock industry and help prepare 4-H and FFA members for various competitions and life skills. Youth also increased their basic understanding of science, agricultural literacy, and technology. They were able to apply science skills to their 4-H projects, explore careers related to animal science and meet new friends, Burr added.

“It was a great day for everyone! Seeing the youth get excited about animals and learning about possible careers makes all the behind the scenes work worth it all!” said Burr. “I appreciate the teamwork of Nebraska Extension staff, NCTA staff, and the many volunteers that planned and helped the field day run smoothly. There’s lots of moving parts all running at the same time!”

Additional information about NCTA’s collegiate academic courses and livestock programs can be found at ncta.unl.edu or contact Dr. Smith at 1-800-3CURTIS. Online link: <http://go.unl.edu/yy57>

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Four-H youth from throughout the West Central region judge swine at NCTA in Curtis. (Frontier County Extension Photo)



Dr. Doug Smith, Nebraska College of Technical Agriculture animal science professor, discusses merits of a class of hogs during the 2017 West Central Animal Science Field Day held at NCTA in Curtis. (Frontier County Extension Photo)



Four-H and FFA youth were shown in a depiction how rangeland management can include a plan for a prescribed burn of vegetation, explained by Justin Nickless with the Nebraska Forest Service, and observed by Nebraska Extension Educators Troy Walz, Custer County and Bruce Treffer, Dawson County (top right). (Photo courtesy of Frontier County Extension).



The 2017 NCTA Standard of Excellence Livestock Judging Camp drew 80 participants, shown at Ag Hall. (T. Smith/NCTA Photo)