

May 12, 2017

By Mary Crawford, NCTA News

## **NCTA: Where colts go to college**

CURTIS, Neb. – One of the unique equine courses offered through the Nebraska College of Technical Agriculture in Curtis is for beginners.

Steven Mueller of rural Cambridge is a veteran horseman - or some might say an old hand at training horses.

For NCTA students, the Colt Starting class at this agricultural campus is a double dose for the price of one as Mueller trains the students, and they train their young steeds.

“This was one of my favorite classes on campus,” said Melissa Ward, a freshman animal science major from Thermopolis, Wyoming. She ranches with her family, where they frequently use horses in their daily work on the range.

In the fall of 2016, when Ward started college as a trusted hand with cattle and horses, she learned about the 8-week colt starting class offered each winter/spring.

So, after winter break she brought along a 3-year-old gelding named, Chief.

One of her classmates, Baily Holt, a rancher from Bassett, Nebraska, brought a 3-year-old gelding owned by an uncle. Other than being halter broke, the “gelding hadn’t been touched” for any training, Holt said.

Animal science and veterinary technology professor Jo Bek, who has also taught equine classes during her 39-year career at NCTA, credits Mueller and equine professor Joanna Hergenreder for refining a solid and safe program for teaching new colts so their trainers can be in the saddle within eight weeks.

“Steven and Joanna carefully evaluate every aspect of this program,” Bek says. Mueller is completing his 10<sup>th</sup> year of teaching the springtime course, which is based each Tuesday evening at the Everett Stencil Livestock Teaching Center’s classroom and indoor arena.

When asked in 2007 by Judy Bowmaster Cole, assistant professor in veterinary technology and former equine instructor, if he would teach the class, Mueller said absolutely he was interested.

“Steven preaches patience, persistence and position,” Bek said of Mueller’s coaching. He and wife, Jeanne (a barrel racer) have made their livelihood by raising, buying, training, selling, teaching or competing in arenas with horses. Jeanne also makes horse tack and conducts barrel racing clinics.

“This recent class was one of the best that Steven has had for progress on the colts and by the students,” Hergenreder said. “I work pretty close with Steven because I teach intermediate training and advanced performance. The horses and students need a solid foundation and he provides that. It is an exceptional foundation.”

Mueller has a bachelor’s degree in animal science from Texas Tech University, and Hergenreder a master’s in equine science from Colorado State University. Mueller said he has enjoyed working with NCTA students which

sometimes includes individuals from the Curtis area who want experience with their horses. Although the class is a group setting, the training and expectations are customized to each student and their colt.

Experience varies from students who've spent their lives roping, working cattle or training, while others are newer to horsemanship. Regardless of experience, handlers are required to wear helmets when in colt class.

Students can take the colt starting class several semesters, but must bring a different colt each time. They pay tuition and bring their own colt or borrow one.

It can be a handy arrangement for area horse owners who might pay the student's tuition, boarding and feed costs, in exchange for a student to start their colt and continue riding it while in college.

Those working with horses or livestock in the college arena are supervised by NCTA staff on site. Students in colt classes can work out with Hergenreder's intermediate and advanced training classes a couple of times each week so they are able to practice weekly assignments and make better progress by the following Tuesday.

Animal health regulations and biosecurity measures are followed for all animals at the campus. NCTA academic teams sponsored through the animal science division include ranch horse, rodeo and livestock judging.

See <http://ncta.unl.edu/equine-industry-management> for additional information about the colt starting course, or ways to earn an Associate of Applied Science degree in equine management.

Online news article: <http://go.unl.edu/ttxx>



Six students completed the colt starting course this spring at the Nebraska College of Technical Agriculture. They are, from left, Shae-Lynn DeNaeyer of Valentine, Melissa Ward of Thermopolis, Wyo., Sydne Shield of Kearney, Alyssa Novak of Eldorado, Carly Wade of Hampden, Maine; Baily Holt of Bassett, and instructor Steven Mueller. (Jo Bek/NCTA Photo)



Colts are started on ground work at halter and long leads during a class in February, 2016. (Crawford/NCTA Photo)

# # #

**Source:** Joanna Hergenreder, assistant professor and Ranch Horse Team coach, 308-367-5291 or [jhergenreder2@unl.edu](mailto:jhergenreder2@unl.edu)

**Writer:** Mary Crawford, NCTA News, 308-367-5231, [Mcrawford@unl.edu](mailto:Mcrawford@unl.edu)

NCTA.Colts.05.12.2017