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By Mary Crawford, NCTA News

Taking cattle judging to heart

VALENTINE, Neb. – Four freshmen from NCTA in Curtis were among 50 college students who competed Saturday at the Heart City Bull Bash Livestock Judging Contest.

The Aggies of the Nebraska College of Technical Agriculture traveled from Curtis to Valentine for the second annual judging contest held in conjunction with Bull Bash events in Cherry County's largest Sandhills community.

"There was a lot of good cattle to look at in Valentine," said Jose De La Cruz, an NCTA freshman who also evaluated livestock with his FFA chapter while a senior at Lakeview High School in Columbus, Nebraska.

"The Valentine contest on Saturday was all beef cattle – just bulls and breeding heifers, where we judged eight classes and talked reasons on four," De La Cruz said.



Aggies representing NCTA Livestock Judging are, from left, top row, Jose De La Cruz, Columbus; Lauren Nichols, Scottsbluff; Bailey Johnson, Hastings, and front row, Avery Bermel, Randolph, and assistant coach Grant Romshek of Shelby. (Photo by Linda Teahon)

Although the freshman's favorite species to evaluate is hogs, cattle come in a close second.

De La Cruz was 6th high individual overall among collegians, and 7th giving his oral reasons. Avery Bermel of Randolph was close behind at 7th overall individually and 9th in reasons.

Reasons provide a verbal justification for the animal placings.

“Growing up, talking reasons wasn’t my favorite thing about livestock judging,” De La Cruz shared. “Now I kind of look forward to it. It’s where you can compete and explain your placings to the judge, and get scored on that skill too.”

Also competing for the NCTA Aggies were Lauren Nichols, Scottsbluff, and Bailey Johnson, Hastings.

NCTA third-year student and assistant coach Grant Romshek of Shelby accompanied the Aggie team while Professor Doug Smith traveled to the Iowa Beef Expo in Des Moines with NCTA’s sophomore team.

The Bull Bash was the third contest in the 2019-20 season for the NCTA freshman. They traveled last fall to Colorado State, and competed in January at Sioux Falls.

This Saturday, the two Aggie teams are entered for the Nebraska Cattlemen’s Classic Beef Judging Contest at Kearney.

De La Cruz said he enjoys traveling to contests with his teammates, while emphasizing livestock judging is one component of his NCTA career. He plans to graduate in May, 2021 and then transfer to the University of Nebraska-Lincoln in veterinary science, and perhaps pursue a career as a veterinarian and livestock producer.

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