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By Mary Crawford, NCTA News

## **Livestock sorting – the Aggie way**

CURTIS, Neb. – A slight of hand may be just the right technique for coaxing a wary goat, lamb or cow into the pen or corral.

Add in the well-trained stock dog and gentle persuasion is more convincing.

Stock dog handlers and about 50 of their canine partners are expected from three or four states in Curtis this weekend, finding great weather, hearty stock and energetic college students running the show.

The March 3-4 Working Stock Dog Trials will be hosted by the Nebraska College of Technical Agriculture Stock Dog Team and their industry counterparts, the Outback Stock Dog Association.

The two-day trial is familiar territory for many stockmen and handlers.

“We will get about 20 to 25 handlers who will show 45 to 50 dogs,” said Kelly Popp, president of the Outback group. He uses stock dogs in his diversified operation near Curtis.

Students run the event at the indoor arena of the NCTA Livestock Teaching Center.

“This is their trial. They run it, they set the cattle and they judge it,” Popp adds. Students gain experience in scoring runs in nursery, open and intermediate classes.



*Stock dog owners at Cattleman's Classic*

Other exhibitors judge the collegiate contest, open only to recent alumni or students of the college club.

The two-day contest is a sanctioned show, accumulating points for the non-collegiate contestants. Those ranking highest in points are invited to regional and national finals this summer.

The collegiate stock owners have advanced in their dog-handling skills since last fall when NCTA classes started and new students discovered the challenge.

“This was an opportunity to work some dogs and to train dogs for people,” said Dottie Fulton, freshman animal science major from Summerfield, Kansas.

“I’d heard about the stock dog team at NCTA, went to a meeting and the Fun Day and I was hooked,” said Fulton, 2018-2019 Stock Dog Club president.

Fulton is training a pup from Vet Tech instructor and Stock Dog Team sponsor, Judy Bowmaster-Cole of Curtis.

The young Border Collie named Snack Pack has learned a lot. Fulton also works with a school-owned Kelpie named Peppers.

Together, the students and Outback club members practice a few times weekly at the nearby Popp farm or at the NCTA Livestock Teaching Center indoor arena.

“I generally have three to five students per day come out and work their dogs,” Popp said. “They have their dogs working really well.”

Four students proved a hit with spectators and industry partners during a cattle working demonstration at the Nebraska Cattlemen’s Classic in Kearney two weeks ago.

This Saturday and Sunday, cattle handling action begins at 9 a.m. at the NCTA campus. Admission is free, and concessions will be handled by the Vet Tech Division’s Safari Club members.

New dog kennels installed on campus over the winter will be dedicated at dog trials on April 7-8.

***NCTA students led a stock dog demonstration at the recent Nebraska Cattlemen’s Classic show in Kearney.***

*From left: Leighlynn Obermiller of Grand Island; Kendra Marxsen of Schuyler; Brenden Bose of Orleans; and Alexis Dorn of Wymore. (Photo credit to Legacy Livestock)*



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