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By Mary Crawford, NCTA News Service

### **Aggie arena goes to the dogs Oct. 8-9**

Curtis, Neb. – A good dog can take the place of one or two people when working around cattle, say dog handlers who use stock dogs for sorting and moving livestock with low stress method on the farm or ranch.

Novice and skilled dog handlers, alike, can gain tips from a veteran stock dog rancher on Saturday, and then get a chance to test those skills on Sunday at the Nebraska College of Technical Agriculture livestock arena.

Activities at the NCTA/Outback Stock Dog Clinic and Trial begin at 9 a.m. both days for spectators and dog handlers who are interested in the art and techniques of working stock dogs, says Sheila Reichmuth of Leigh, Neb., president of the NCTA Stock Dog Club.

“This will be really great for freshmen and our new students on campus as well as the public to spark an interest in stock dogs,” said the second-year vet tech student. Reichmuth is training a 10-month-old Border Collie named Annie, who was donated to the college’s club by Kelly Popp of Curtis.

Students in the NCTA club are primarily associated through the dog obedience classes or other livestock-related studies at NCTA, Reichmuth said. The 20 student members have organized the weekend events with a regional group, the Outback Stock Dog Association.

The Outback group is comprised of stockmen, ranchers and dog enthusiasts. Organizers Kelly Popp of Curtis, Bill Stone of North Platte, and Eddie Merritt of Wellfleet, have mentored and encouraged the NCTA students the past two years as trainers and handlers of their own or NCTA-owned dogs.

Brooke Taylor Blowers of Arnold will be taking her dogs, Freckles and Bria, to the clinic on Saturday to learn more tips from one of the state’s top stock dog handlers. Tim Gifford ranches near Harrisburg, Nebraska, in Banner County and is nationally ranked in stock dog trials with his dog, Jean.

Spectators are invited to attend both sessions, with Gifford’s handling clinic on Saturday, then a competitive trial for handlers and dogs. Previous contests have drawn handlers from Nebraska, Wyoming, Kansas and Colorado.

Judy Bowmaster-Cole, who teaches agility and dog obedience among her other duties at the NCTA Veterinary Technology Systems program knows the value of well-trained stock dogs.

As faculty sponsor for the NCTA club, she is encouraged by the interest demonstrated by students and the dedication they use in applying what they learn at the ag college to practical situations on the farm or ranch.

“We have a lot of area interest in our stock dog club including donations of dogs, financial gifts and alumni support to our students,” Bowmaster-Cole said. “That is quite a validation of what we do here in our programs at NCTA.”

Admission is free to spectators, and registration fees will be charged to participating dogs and handlers. Proof of dog vaccinations is required before participating. For additional information, contact Bowmaster-Cole at 402-340-1260 or Kelly Popp at 308-367-7127.

News article link at: <http://go.unl.edu/o43c>

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Kelly Popp of Curtis and his dog, Blue, work cattle at his farm and coordinate the NCTA/Outback Stock Dog events this weekend at the Nebraska College of Technical Agriculture, Curtis. Spectators are invited to attend at 9 a.m. (Courtesy photos)