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By Mary Crawford, NCTA News

NCTA Vet Techs get the picture

Curtis, Neb. – Place the patient on the exam table, hold it very still, adjust the camera just so, and click. The cat's entire periodontal image is on film.

Veterinary technology students at the Nebraska College of Technical are using state-of-the-art technology for making dental radiographs, or x-rays, thanks to donors and grants that helped purchase a digital mobile imaging system.

Working as technicians in veterinary clinics and assisting animal health practitioners, licensed veterinary technicians use dozens of skills including taking dental radiographs and cleaning teeth of their patients.

Students learn these skills as required coursework in experiential career programs such NCTA's Veterinary Technology Systems Division.

"This machine equips our radiology program with advanced tools for taking a radiograph below the gum line and seeing what is occurring in the mouth of the animal," said Barb Berg, VTS Division chairman and professor. "Two-thirds of a pet's teeth are below the gum line and not visible so accurate imaging assists the veterinarian in the best diagnosis and treatment plan."

The University of Nebraska institution located at Curtis has trained veterinary technicians for their professional skills since 1968, and has been a continuously accredited "vet tech" program for more than four decades by the American Veterinary Medical Association.

In the last few years the AVMA has added a dental x-ray machine as an essential piece of equipment for the college's instructional needs, Berg said.

Now, NCTA's experiential learning format will further enhance the program's radiology suite and dental care of small animals, particularly dogs and cats, as well as horses.

"Our four faculty and some of the students were trained this week on use of the new technology," Berg said. "We will be incorporating dental radiographs with the machine into our Radiology I, Radiology II, Anesthesia and Nursing II courses."

Currently, the college's animal health courses are fully enrolled with students and in May the program will have graduated more than 800 students with an associate degree in one of the five options in veterinary technology – Animal Health Management, Animal Husbandry, Equine Health, Veterinary Assistant or Veterinary Technician.

Graduates with the Veterinary Technician option are eligible to sit for the Veterinary Technician National Examination and with passage to become licensed veterinary technicians.

NCTA received private grants of \$5,000 from Keith and Norma Heuermann of Phillips, through the B. Keith & Norma F. Heuermann Foundation, Omaha, and \$3,000 from the Mid-Nebraska Community Foundation, North Platte, along with \$10,000 in federal monies from the Perkins Basic State Grant program.

“We are extremely appreciative of the grants from these two foundations to help us launch this project. We couldn’t have ordered the equipment without their great support,” Berg said.

A final component is to acquire a procedure table on which animals are correctly positioned for the x-ray and dental procedures.

Meanwhile, the VT students at NCTA are progressing through daily coursework in subjects such as anatomy and physiology, facilities management, pharmacology and anesthesia, diseases of veterinary medicine, fur and feather, medical terminology and surgery prep, Berg said.

Additional information about NCTA’s [veterinary technician](#) program is available at ncta.unl.edu or 1-800-3CURTIS.

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Vet Tech students at the Nebraska College of Technical Agriculture in Curtis receive training from Maria Nellesen, CVT with Midmark Animal Health, on how to operate dental radiology equipment for small animals. From left, are students Emily Lamgo of Denver, Hanna Christenson of Ord, and Rebecca Wentz of Clayton, Kansas. (Hauptman/NCTA Photo)