



NEBRASKA COLLEGE OF TECHNICAL AGRICULTURE

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By NCTA News

Aggie crops team takes 2nd at Kansas contest

Four students from the Nebraska College of Technical Agriculture in Curtis, all from rural Nebraska communities and soon graduating with associate degrees, won second-place team last week in a college crops judging contest.

NCTA Aggies competed Friday among 13 colleges in the Blue Dragon Classic at Hutchinson, Kansas.

The season finale for the Aggie sophomores garnered top awards while freshmen counterparts from NCTA had a second trial run in a collegiate contest.

“Our lead team placed second in a very close contest behind the host school, Hutchinson Community College,” said Brad Ramsdale, NCTA agronomy professor and crops team coach.



Crops Judging Team members from the Nebraska College of Technical Agriculture view specimens in plant identification at Hutchinson, Kansas. (Photo by Brad Ramsdale / NCTA Crops Team)

Crops contests focus on knowledge and skill requirements to become a certified crop advisor. Four parts include agronomic knowledge exam, math practical, lab practical, and plant and seed identification.

The Aggies were led in individual rankings by Connor Nolan, Lynch, who won second place overall. He captured first places in lab practical and agronomic knowledge.

“I was pleased with the results considering the overall difficulty of each exam,” Nolan said.

Jacob Jenkins, Mitchell, place third overall, with Taylor Sayer, Cambridge, and Lilly Calkins, Palmyra, comprising the sophomore team.

Freshmen students competing unofficially were Koltyn Forbes, Wood River; Ahren Marburger, Malvern, Iowa; Allison Wilkens, Gibbon; Kaden Bryant, Firth; and Kamren Sitzman, McCook.

The five are eligible to return next fall and compete for the Aggies.

Crops judging helped Taylor Sayer solidify further interest in agronomy.

“I have learned so much from it,” Sayer said of the two-year program. “It has helped me learn agronomy at a deeper level.”

In fact, after graduating in May, Sayer will be a summer intern at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln’s West Central Research, Extension and Education Center in North Platte. There she will assist with crops and weed

research. Next fall, Sayer begins a bachelor's degree program at UNL and eventually hopes to earn her doctorate in agronomy.

She recommends crops classes and judging team experience to any student interested in studying agronomy or diversified agriculture (combination majors in agronomy, livestock management, agribusiness and/or agricultural mechanics.

"Dr. Ramsdale is very knowledgeable in what he teaches," Sayer said. "Aggie students are very fortunate to have Brad as a professor and academic advisor."

Nolan also is contemplating advanced judging competitions when he, too, transfers to UNL in the fall.

Jenkins will be returning to his family's diversified operation near Mitchell.

Calkins said it was another challenging contest. "It went well but really pushed our brains to think. The highlight of the trip was just being with the team for the last time of competition."

She has accepted an agronomy position with Axis Seed in Culbertson.

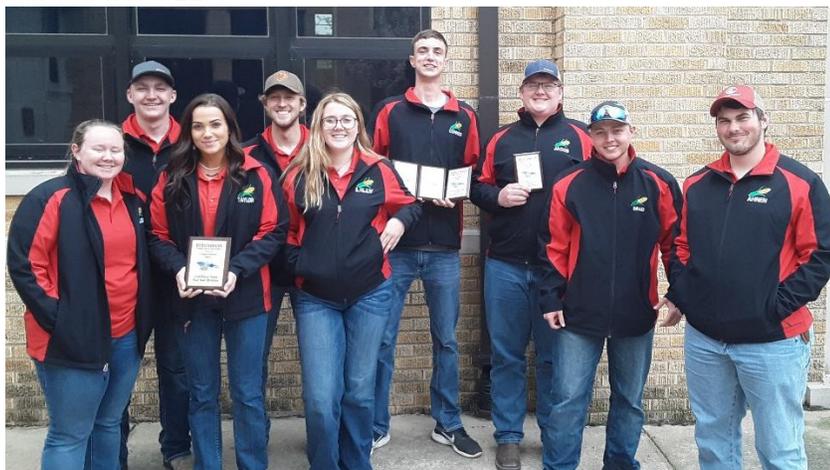
"I will be scouting fields most of the first year of employment, building relationships with farmer clients and then learning seed sales as time progresses," she said.

Calkins also will pursue a second passion developed as an NCTA Aggie, in training her dog, Odin, and competing in stock dog trials with the NCTA Stock Dog Team, and with the Outback Stock Dog Association.

NCTA will host national contests March 30 through April 2, 2022 when the North American Colleges and Teachers in Agriculture hold its NACTA Judging Conference in Nebraska. Contests in several categories of agriculture will be hosted at facilities in North Platte to accommodate colleges from throughout the United States.

Due to COVID, NACTA Conferences were not held in 2020 or 2021.

For further information about the agronomy program at NCTA, contact Dr. Ramsdale at bramsdale2@unl.edu or call 308-367-5225.



Freshmen and sophomore NCTA Crops Judging Teams include (l to r) Allison Wilkens, Kamren Sitzman, Taylor Sayer, Lilly Calkins, Connor Nolan, Jacob Jenkins, Kaden Bryant, and Ahren Marburger. The Aggies won second place team. (Photo by Brad Ramsdale / NCTA Crops Team)