

Quality beef is #1 priority for grads

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Cattle production is big business in Nebraska.

Pride in quality beef ownership is the number one priority for Cow/Calf College program graduates, who know one in five pieces of beef eaten is from the great state of Nebraska. Each graduate is committed to the philosophy of becoming the best by building on new research.

This means, “we’re continuing to build our legacies onto what our grandfathers and their grandparents practiced on the family farms and ranches which resulted in making this country great” stated Calvin Wineland, a recent Cow/Calf College program graduate.

Students came from all over the state to complete the Cow/Calf College.

Gothenburg, resident and Cow/Calf College graduate Brandon Koch, former UNL football player, returned to his 100-year-old family farm after getting married and starting a family, because he wanted to raise their son with the same family values and traditions he experienced.

Calvin and Desiree Wineland, who after retiring from the U.S. Army last year, moved to Cambridge near their 120-year-old family farm, with the same goal for their two boys.

Tracy Pore from Elsie grew up raising cattle with her father and grandfather and has purchased 63 head. She enrolled in the Cow/Calf College to learn about new ranch management techniques.

Ryan Hokanson, a new dad from Sargent, wanted to improve upon his ranching experience. Long time rancher, James “JB” Fitzpartrick, dreamed of becoming an independent rancher and praises NCTA for providing a program that allows him to get the educational foundation, plus an FSA low interest loan to make his dream possible.

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The course was taught in conjunction with the Nebraska College of Technical Agriculture, the West Central Research and Extension Center and the Institute of Agriculture and National Resources under the leadership of NCTA Professors Dave Smith and Joe Bek. With almost 70 combined years of dedicated teaching experience, these professors work to improve the agricultural community. Program subjects covered over the compressed program included: Beef Cattle Production Systems, Matching Requirements to Resources, Making the Perfect Cow, Herd Management, Grazing Management Strategies and Beef Quality Assurance. Students were provided with delicious meals and campus lodging to ease travel. Cattle Handling Principles, taught by Dr. Tom Noffsinger (DMV) was a favorite class. Students learned that by reducing the stress an animal experiences, the animal will have a stronger immune system, will produce healthier calves and will turn out a higher quality of beef. Almost a "horse whisperer," Dr. Tom demonstrated, and students practiced hands-on, how to lead cattle vs. pushing, hollering and stressing cattle. Dr. Tom shares the credit with Bud Williams of Bowie, Texas for these techniques of gentler animal handling. Other field trips included hands-on cattle handling at Hi-Gain Feedlot in Farnam, Nebraska, a Cedar Tree Burning and Sheering tour with land owner Mr. Stan Pilcher and various site visits to observe NCTA Grazing Land Management practices.

All of the graduates will continue their education in the 100 Beef Cow Ownership Advantage Outreach Program through NCTA. Dean Weldon Sleight envisioned this program with the goal to provide instruction in research-based cattle production techniques, entrepreneurship, financial management, business plan and loan application development through the EDGE program.

The outreach program is designed to help those individuals (non-traditional students) interested in preparing to own a beef cattle operation.

Participants will be taught in conjunction with the Gudmundsen Sandhills Laboratory Ranch Practicum and the West Central Research and Extension Center in North Platte, with support from the Nebraska Department of Agriculture; Nebraska Cattlemen; Nebraska Farm Bureau and Farm Service Agency.