

Extreme Cowboy Race

By Jennifer Allford

Wendy Hawes, clinical teaching assistant at the University of Calgary Veterinary Medicine Faculty's clinical skills building, finished second place in her division in the Extreme Cowboy Race at Aggie Days in April.

The Extreme Cowboy Race—one of the fastest growing equine sports in the world—times the horse and rider as they maneuver through a series of obstacles, such as running through plastic curtains and carrying hay.

“They’re obstacles that you will routinely encounter while on a trail ride or daily work on a ranch, says Hawes who has been riding all her life. “Some of the obstacles were pretty difficult to overcome—opening and closing gates while on horseback, crossing narrow bridges and jumping walls, just to name a few—but I loved the challenge that it gave to both me and my horse.”

The Extreme Cowboy Race was started by Texas cowboy, Craig Cameron, who developed a reality TV show that challenges cowboys from across the U.S. to compete for the title of champion at his ranch. The popularity of the show led Cameron and his Extreme Cowboy Association to start holding events across North America. In 2009, the first year of competition, there were 70 events held across 22 American states.



Wendy Hawes and her colt, Drifter, started training for the competition in January. Photo credit: Kim Cottam

This is the second year the event was held in Calgary. Hawes and her colt, Drifter, started training for the event in January. “We have had to face all kinds of weather in order to get ready for this competition,” she says. “The ground has been icy, the wind nasty and at times we had to ride through a lot of snow.”

Hawes, who assists in setting up labs for the veterinary students, says several co-workers came out to cheer her on.

“It’s been on my bucket list and now that it was in my back yard I couldn’t resist,” says Hawes. “I am always looking for new things to do with my horse and thought this would be good exposure for a young horse. This was our first competition but hope to do a few more.”