

Janet Crawford
Scientist
Reproduction Group
AgResearch Wallaceville Animal Research Centre

My early interest in the biology of farmed animals lead me to undertake a BSc(Hons) in Applied Biology at Lincoln University in Canterbury, New Zealand in 1990. During the second year of my BSc, I sent numerous letters accompanied by a very thin CV to various research institutes around the country asking for vacation employment to gain more experience in the laboratory and an insight into research of farmed animals. I was extremely fortunate that Dr Bernie McLeod from AgResearch Invermay Agricultural Centre (then MAF) in Mosgiel extracted my letter from the rubbish bin of a colleague and offered me a position as a technical assistant that was to extend over all my university vacations. It was here that my passion for reproductive biology was borne. Following completion of my BSc(Hons) degree in 1993, I worked as a technical assistant at AgResearch Invermay until I was successful in gaining a MAF Policy scholarship for undertaking a PhD in mid 1994. Under the expert guidance of Drs Peter Hurst (Department of Anatomy and Structural Biology, University of Otago) and Bernie McLeod, my PhD investigated the reproductive physiology of New Zealand's most important vertebrate pest, the brushtail possum. In particular, the changes in structure and function of the reproductive tract in this marsupial species. After the successful completion of my PhD in mid-late 1997, I continued at AgResearch Invermay for a couple of months writing up papers for publication. During this time with the influence of Dr Bernie McLeod, I was able to organise a Post-doctorate under Professor Alan McNeilly at the Human Reproductive Sciences Unit-Medical Research Council (HRSU-MRC) in Edinburgh, Scotland. Initially, I was successfully awarded a one year AgResearch post-doctoral fellowship in 1998 and then subsequently successfully gained a three-four year post-doctoral fellowship from the *Journal of Reproduction and Fertility* to continue with this work. At the HRSU-MRC, my research involved the investigation of pituitary gland function in the role of reproduction using mice and sheep as research models. I was particularly interested in the role of granins in the regulation of differential secretion of the gonadotrophins (luteinising hormone and follicle-stimulating hormone) from the pituitary gland. During the fourth year of my post-doctoral studies, I was invited by Dr Ken McNatty to apply for a permanent Scientist position in the Reproduction group at AgResearch Wallaceville Animal Research Centre in Upper Hutt. I was successful in my application and returned to New Zealand in mid 2002. My research at present involves the investigation of pituitary function in the brushtail possum for identification of mechanisms that can potentially be manipulated as a means of biological control in this species.