

My host researcher, Professor Hisashi Aso, Graduate School of Agriculture, Tohoku University, Sendai, was awarded a JSPS short term fellowship and I was invited to spend six weeks in Japan between June and August 2014. For three of those weeks I was working in his laboratory alongside his researchers and students looking at the expression of parathyroid hormone related protein (PTHrP) expression in the mammary gland of cattle, as part of a larger project to determine the function of this protein in mammary function. We took mammary tissue from a lactating cow and fixed it in paraffin, sliced it on a microtome, and set up the immunohistochemistry for an antibody to PTHrP that I had available. For the remaining three weeks I travelled around Japan speaking with colleagues about my research and listening to theirs; I visited the Hokkaido National Agricultural Experiment Station, Shinshu University, and the National Institute of Livestock and Grassland Science, Tsukuba. While I was at Tohoku University I spoke at the Third International Mini Symposium at Tohoku University for New Challenges for Animal Science Research. During each of these events I also took the opportunity to network, and discuss future collaborations. I found my Japanese colleagues to be extremely polite and helpful at all times, and a sense of adventure on my part were enough to see the few minor problems that we faced resolved. Travel in Japan on the Shinkansen 'Bullet' trains was extremely fast and efficient and that is one of the big memories that I will take back with me. My only other advice (if you are from a cool northern climate such as me) would be to avoid the summer in Japan, as I did find it rather hot and humid. Nevertheless, I found the experience of visiting in Japan to be extremely rewarding, on a professional and personal level, I look forward to following up the links that I have established this time, and of course I very much look forward to visiting Japan again.

