

# Koreans test NZ velvet in lab

THREE RE-SEARCH projects on velvet are underway in Korea following an investigation by Dr Jimmy Suttie of AgResearch Invermay.

In 1994 Dr Suttie travelled to Korea to attend a symposium on velvet antler organised by the Korean Society of Pharmacognosy, and to discuss the possibility of collaborative research with the Koreans.

The outcome was three projects, two of them clinical studies by the society to study the effectiveness of NZ velvet on "well-being", using laboratory animals. The other is a study by traditional oriental doctors into alleviating osteoporosis.

The projects are part of collaborative research funded by the Game In-



Dr Suttie

dustry Board as part of its investment in VARNZ — the joint venture research company between the board and AgResearch that has developed a velvet formula for use in tonics.

At this stage Dr Suttie is wary of making any definitive statement on the trials, beyond saying that

results are "positive". However, he is unable to fully evaluate the work until the final results are ready later in the year.

There are two medical factions in Korea. The Society of Pharmacognosy represents the faction with a more westernised orientation, while oriental doctors practise the more traditional type of medicine.

However, Dr Suttie said both approaches are respectable in terms of science.

"I looked at their (research) protocols, and was satisfied that the work will increase velvet's credibility. The overall approaches are acceptable to western science," said Dr Suttie.

He added that the research is essentially di-

## Tonic potential

SALES OF VELVET tonics in Korea last year topped \$NZ20 million, according to Game Industry Board figures.

This figure shows the huge potential for consumer ready velvet products in that market. The board believes this justifies its joint venture with AgResearch Invermay — Velvet Antler Research New Zealand (VARNZ) — to develop the basis for such products.

rected at the Korean consumer, and the results should enhance the credibility of NZ product in the marketplace. Further work is planned to take place in New Zealand, in partnership with the University of Otago Medical School.—*Brendan Hutching*