

GTC Bio To Begin New Zealand Development Program

By Matthew L. Brown | Worcester Business Journal Staff Writer

Framingham-based GTC Biotherapeutics Inc. has entered into a collaboration agreement with AgResearch Limited of New Zealand.

Under the agreement, AgResearch will develop genetically modified animals capable of producing the building blocks for “biosimilar” pharmaceuticals. Biosimilars have the same or similar amino acid structure as existing pharmaceuticals. Using genetically modified animals to produce biosimilars allows GTC to generate large volumes of such products at lower costs, which simultaneously allows for lower consumer prices and greater profit margin for the company.

GTC said the New Zealand development program will produce biosimilar versions of existing products that will begin coming off U.S. patent in 2014.

AgResearch will establish the program’s production herd with a grant awarded by the government of New Zealand. The company will also receive royalties on any future sales of the products developed by the program.

GTC said it chose to develop the biosimilar program in New Zealand because of the country’s strong animal health record and expertise in animal husbandry.

Biosimilars are being considered for approval in both Europe and the United States.

GTC recently won U.S. Food and Drug Administration approval for its ATryn product, a clot-fighting drug based on a protein produced in the milk of genetically modified goats.