Acknowledgements

This thesis is the end of my journey in obtaining my Ph.D. I have not travelled in a vacuum in this journey. This thesis has been kept on track and been seen through to completion with the support and encouragement of numerous people including my well wishers and my friends. At the end of my thesis, it is a pleasant task to express my thanks to all those who contributed in many ways to the success of this study and made it an unforgettable experience for me.

I offer this endeavour at the lotus feet of our lord, the Almighty God.

I am extremely indebted to my advisor Dr. Rajesh Rajput for his valuable advice, constructive criticism and his extensive discussions around my work. I have been amazingly fortunate to have him as an advisor. His expertise, understanding and patience added considerably to my doctoral experience. Under his guidance I successfully overcame many difficulties and learned a lot. I appreciate his vast knowledge and skill in many areas and his assistance in writing reports (i.e., applications and this thesis), which have on occasion made me "GREEN" with envy. I am also thankful to him for encouraging the use of correct grammar and consistent notation in my writings and for carefully reading and commenting on countless revisions of this manuscript.

This work would have not been possible without the guidance, support and encouragement of Dr. R. L. Bhardwaj who gave me the freedom to explore on my own and at the same time the guidance to recover when my steps faltered. He taught me how to question thoughts and express ideas. His patience and support helped me overcome many critical situations and finish this work. His unflinching courage and conviction will always inspire me, and I hope to continue to work with his noble thoughts. I wish him the best of his health and peaceful retired life.

I am grateful to Dr. Virender Pathak for his encouragement and practical advice. I am also thankful to him for numerous discussions, listening my research problems, commenting on my views and helping me understand and enrich my ideas.

I gratefully acknowledge Dr. R. Kumar, Dr. S. K Sharma and Dr. Madhumeeet Singh the members of my advisory committee for their encouragement, personal attention and valuable suggestions which have provided good and smooth basis for my
Ph.D. tenure. I am also thankful to Dr. Madan Verma for his support during my experimentation in Physiology laboratory.

My thanks are due to Dr. K.B Sharma and Dr. Navneet Vashishth for their suggestions, inspiration and moral support. It’s my pleasure to acknowledge Dr. S.P Tayagi, Dr. Arvind, Dr. Adarsh and Dr. Amit Singla for their guidance.

Many friends have helped me stay sane through these difficult years. Their support and care helped me overcome setbacks and stay focused on my doctoral study. I greatly value their friendship and I deeply appreciate their belief in me. I am indebted to them for providing a stimulating and fun filled environment. My thanks go in particular to Raheeqa Rizvi with whom I started this work and many rounds of discussions on my research work with her helped me a lot. I am ever indebted to Shailza Katoch for her friendship, encouragement and her constant support. I am indebted to some of my good friends Musrat Mushtaq and JK Choudhary for their valuable help and support. I am also thankful to my juniors Shabir and Brij Vanita for their moral support.

My special acknowledgements go to all those people who made possible the difficult task of ‘Sample collection’ for my research work. My warm appreciation is due to Dr Sushil Sharma for his untired help during sample collection.

Thanks are duly acknowledged to the non teaching staff of the Department of Veterinary Anatomy Om Praksh, Amar Singh, Jindo, Billu and Pundri Prasad for timely and sincere help during the course of my entire study. I would like to thank the staff members of Dean Post Graduate studies for their help and support.

For scholarship I would like to thank the Government of India, Ministry of Science & Technology, Department of Science & Technology for INSPIRE fellowship scheme that provided the generous financial support throughout my doctorate.

Most importantly, none of this would have been possible without the love and patience of my parents who have been a perennial source of energy and supported me spiritually throughout my life. I would like to express my heart-felt gratitude to my family who has been a constant source of love, concern, support and strength all these years. I am thankful to Rupali and Kapil for their constant encouragement and moral support. I would like to give a special mention for the support given to me by my in-laws. My extended family has aided and encouraged me throughout this endeavor. I warmly appreciate their generosity and understanding.
Special thanks to little Noddy and Paru who enlightened my stress by their naughty deeds and sharing light tit and bits.

As for my husband Dr. Ashutosh Sharma, I find it difficult to express my appreciation because it is so boundless. He is my most enthusiastic cheerleader and he is an amazing husband. Without his willingness and supportive nature, this work would have taken even longer to complete; without his sunny optimism, I would be a much grumpier person. I am grateful to him for his constant moral support.

For any errors or inadequacies that may remain in this work, of course, the responsibility is entirely my own.

Place: Palampur (Parul Shukla)
Dated: October, 2015