

John Lever

Owner/Manager of Koorana Crocodile Farm – Coowonga, Queensland

Deputy Chair – Regional Development Australia Fitzroy and Central West



John Lever grew up in Melbourne, Victoria before spending time at his brother-in-law's wheat farm where he discovered his innate love of the land.

John obtained a diploma in agricultural science before working a variety of jobs, from a teacher to developing vaccines for cattle for the CSIRO.

John even travelled to Papua New Guinea as a wildlife officer, managing stations that included a bird of paradise sanctuary, a deer research station and a crocodile farm.

John started up crocodile management training teams, to sit down with people for a month or two to teach them how to handle their crocs and how to look after them and achieve good growth rates.

By the late 70s, John had decided it was time to return home and start up his own crocodile farming business. He and his wife, Lillian, started in 1981 with just three crocodiles at the Koorana Crocodile Farm near Rockhampton. Today they have more than 3,500 as part of their family business.

John's family has an allocation for eggs from the Northern Territory, as the practice is banned in Queensland.

A contracting farm rears the hatchlings after John has harvested the eggs from the wild, and once they're big enough, they're transported south to his farm in central Queensland. It's the only way we could reach that critical 2,000 skins a year. Otherwise, like a lot of other crocodile farms have found, economically it's not viable to have breeding farms to get that level of eggs.

John said they hope to expand their crocodile numbers to 10,000 in the next few years.