

University chemist develops innovative product for niche market

Wampum® Grooming Products (Pty) Ltd is a South African manufacturing company that produces shampoos, conditioners and grooming sprays for show dogs, cats and horses. Although the products are available locally, the main pull in this niche market is international and Wampum exports to 15 countries worldwide.

These products are the brainchild of Dr Heidi Rolfes, a member of the University's Department of Chemical Engineering. In fact, Heidi joined the University of Pretoria because she found the academic environment to be more conducive to innovation than the private sector. She feels that the openness of the Faculty of Engineering, Built Environment and Information Technology allows incredible technical progress to occur.

Wampum products are formulated scientifically and are quite different from the other products that are available in pet shops and at veterinary practices. For example, the conditioning shampoo is formulated at pH=7.4 (the pH of dog and cat skin) and is 100% biodegradable and hypoallergenic. It is made from pure coconut oil derivatives. The shampoo does not contain any fragrances, colourants or preservatives. It creates a microenvironment on the skin after use, which is very unkind to

pathogens. In addition, the shampoo contains a skin refatting agent to soothe 80% of all dry skin problems. There are currently about 30 products in the Wampum range. ➔



Dr Heidi Rolfes obtained a degree in Chemical Engineering from the University of Pretoria. She completed her MSc and PhD in Polymer Science at the University of Manchester Institute of Science and Technology in the United Kingdom. She returned to South Africa and spent the next 15 years working in polymer product development at the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) in Pretoria. She started her own business in 2006 and holds three world patents in pharmaceutical product development.

