



# Goat milk soaps clean up

By SAMANTHA  
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TWO years ago Leanne Faulkner knew nothing about making soap and even less about running her own business.

She could never have imagined that her part-time hobby – milking and showing her pet dairy goats – would become the catalyst for a unique venture that has taken Australia by storm and now has her poised to conquer the Asian export market.

It started when Mrs Faulkner, concerned by her young son Liam's eczema, gave up on more conventional treatments and began researching possible alternatives.

She found people with dry and sensitive skin had benefited from using skincare products made from goat's milk and signed up for some soap making lessons – and before long Billie Goat Soap was born.

"I made a lot of very bad soap for a long time," Mrs Faulkner said.

"I played with different recipes until I finally came up with one that I liked and which seemed to get results."

Mrs Faulkner bought her first goat, Jenny, from the RSPCA several years ago and soon fell in love with the Saanen breed.

"Jenny was so beautiful that we decided to get more," she said.

"We became involved with the Dairy Goat Society of Australia and began taking our goats to

local agricultural shows."

Mrs Faulkner now keeps six Saanens on the five-hectare property she shares with her husband and their family at Ourimbah, on the State's Central Coast.

As her herd has expanded, Mrs Faulkner has also sent goats to commercial dairy goat farm, Blue Brook Dairy and Stud, at Wilberforce, north-west of Sydney.

Together, the goats at Ourimbah and Wilberforce produce the more than 100 litres of milk needed each week to make enough soap to meet demand.

"All our products are hand-made and totally milk based," said Mrs Faulkner.

"Goat's milk has a pH level very close to our skin's own pH, and it contains valuable vitamins and nutrients which help to rejuvenate the skin's surface."

Mrs Faulkner said her goats were milked daily following a strict hygiene regime.

"After we combine the milk with a range of oils, we follow a traditional handmade production process before leaving the soap to cure on our shelves."

From its humble beginnings just 16 months ago, Billie Goat Soap is now sold in more than 300 stores across the country.

More recently, Mrs Faulkner began exporting her brand to Korea and Taiwan, a move which forced her to reassess her pro-

duction methods and "work smarter".

"It's been a really painful learning year for me and it's involved some letting go," she said.

"I had to face up to the fact that mass production would have been impossible if we continued with the same process – so we did a time and motion study, standardised the look of the soap, and refined the way we did things to save time."

Mrs Faulkner has hired two full-time soap makers to join her, as well as a general hand and casual accounts person.

She said expanding the business had required a "fair bit of personal investment", but insisted it had all been worthwhile.

"We've had to invest in employing and training staff, bulk oil supplies, package development and in-store display materials," said Mrs Faulkner.

"The outlay's been significant, but we're starting to turn the corner now."

Thanks to her success in Korea and Taiwan, Mrs Faulkner, with the help of the Federal Government's export promotion agency Austrade, is now revising her export plan to include Singapore and other parts of Asia, as well as the Middle East and Northern Europe.

"We had always planned to export, but we didn't expect to be doing it so quickly – I'm certainly surprised by how rapidly the business has expanded," she said.



**LEFT:** Leanne Faulkner inspects some of her Billie Goat soaps.



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