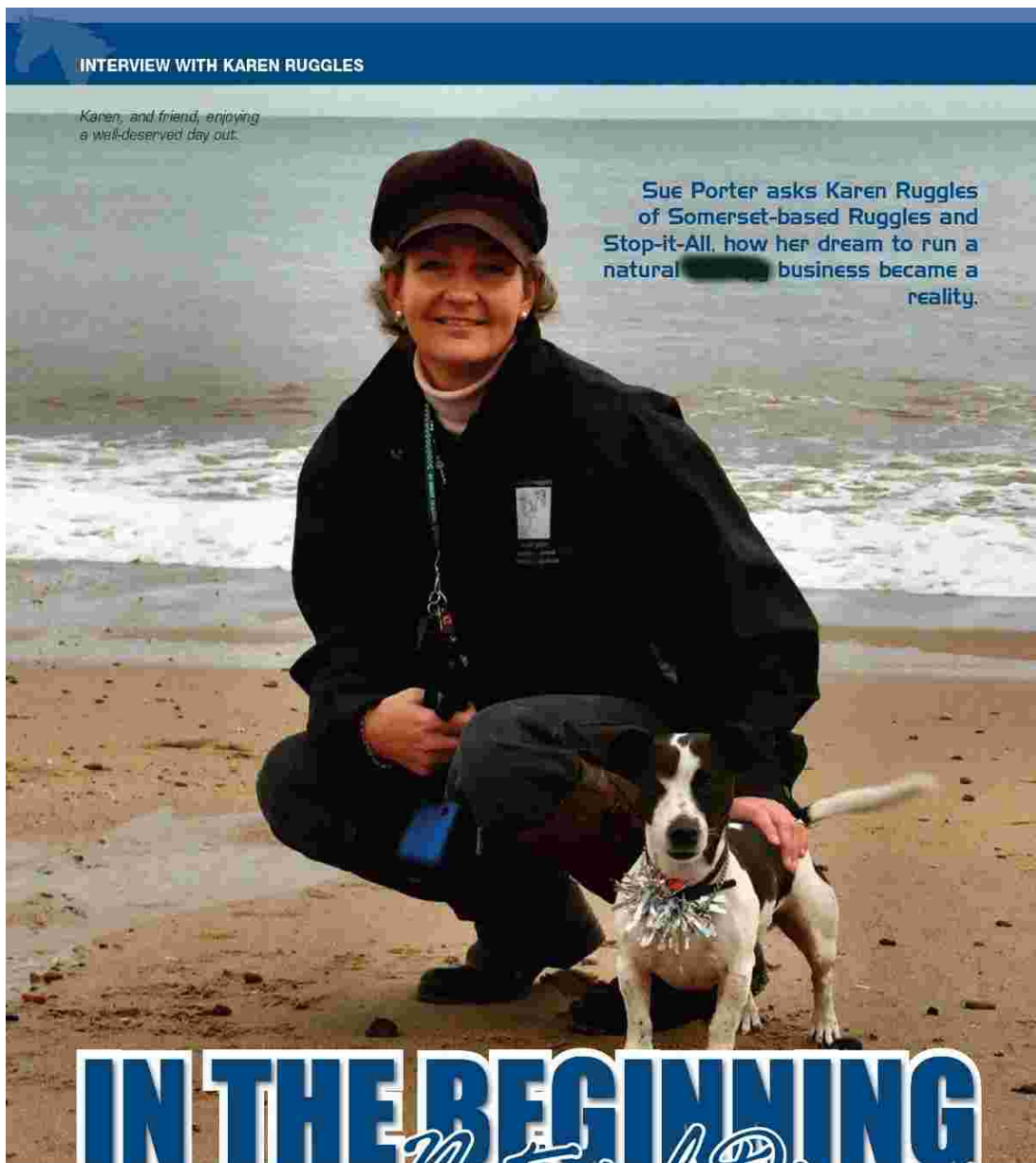




February/March 2009

Stop-it-All in the News Equestrian Lifestyle Magazine (2 pages)

ZOOM NOTE: To clearly see this text, please use the '+' keys on the top of this screen to enlarge it to 100% or greater]



INTERVIEW WITH KAREN RUGGLES

Karen, and friend, enjoying a well-deserved day out.

Sue Porter asks Karen Ruggles of Somerset-based Ruggles and Stop-it-All, how her dream to run a natural business became a reality.

IN THE BEGINNING *Natural Dreams*

How did Stop-it-All come about?

I moved to Somerset in 2005, after previously living in Australia and Africa. Once settled I began helping out at horse events, and noticed that the number of animals suffering from summer itching had grown massively since the late seventies when I was riding competitively.

Whilst discussing this with a friend, I discovered she was using vegetable oils to retard insects on plants. She queried why, with my experiences in Australia and Africa, I didn't investigate the potential healing properties of indigenous plants. As I was recovering from a debilitating

illness and was unable to work, I decided that I would have time to conduct some research. I had dreamed about finding a way to help animals but thus far life had never allowed such a change of direction.

While living in a remote lighthouse in Mozambique, Africa, it was a minimum eight mile walk to the closest community, so being self sufficient was paramount. Whatever first aid and food items we needed had to be carried on foot so the motivation was strong to 'convert' whatever was growing around us into

multi-purpose 'tools'.

The Neem tree was the starting point. It grows in many third world countries and is often referred to by the locals as the 'village pharmacy' because so many parts of the tree have benefits for health. If animal issues here in the West could drive a demand for what 'Mother Nature' had given them and benefit the local people financially, it felt very right.

Thereafter, other vegetable oils were considered, although many were dropped when my research identified too many



At home in 1978 on Kanzler, aged 15.



side effects and/or risks, and as they passed my 'trip wires', the list was slowly whittled down to the current five.

How did Stop-it-All develop?

The first guinea pig was always me! If something was going to sting or hurt, I wasn't prepared to consider it on animals who couldn't tell us of their discomfort.

Early on I inadvertently gashed my hand pretty badly - the perfect scenario to try some oils on it. When it instantly soothed the throbbing and seemed to help it heal very quickly, I was intrigued.

Friends then started trying small amounts on their animals, always careful to start slowly in case of any reactions. The more I researched, the more the beneficial properties identified themselves.

I decided not to use tea tree, despite having lived in Australia and seen it at work for many issues, because when I've used it on my highly reactive skin, it has stung. It's great as an astringent/disinfectant but hardly soothing. But the key reason was because of research that showed it had proved fatal for quite a few cats. To this day I continue to use it on my face but I refuse to risk it on animals.

If I was considering an oil-based product, I needed to find a gentle yet effective way to get it off. An article in a Sainsbury's magazine featured a piece on harsh chemicals used in many of our everyday human and baby products.

So again the midnight oil was burned trying to decipher what was scare-mongering and what might have credence. As with many things in modern life, there's good and bad, and if we are informed on the whole picture, then the choice is ours what to do with that information.

After much shampoo research I was deeply concerned about these harsh chemicals, so decided that the Parabens and Sodium Lauryl Sulphate families of chemicals had no place in anything I might use on animals.

After the products had been exhausted on animals owned by friends, I needed

to 'know' if this was a flash in the pan or not, as I couldn't bear to potentially sell something if I had any doubts.

I had to risk my own dwindling funds to know. So adverts went out in various publications for trial participants to apply to join the program.

It was only at the end of the trial in 2007 when the results were analysed and were so good that suddenly I realised I couldn't just 'play' at this any more.

This desire to 'work for the animals' drives me today. Therefore I discuss ideas for 'whole health' and not solely selling my products. I try to keep an open mind on health and not just look at what I can see on the surface or what is 'fashionable' at that particular time. Sometimes there's much to be said about the 'good old days and simplicity'.

Where do you want to be in five years time?

Helping thousands of animals, great or small, anywhere in the world! I hope that Stop-it-All can be the 'default choice' for a product that delivers results for multiple issues, across a wide variety of animal and human issues, yet is kind on the skin, our environment and our pockets.

I also hope to be helping generate good incomes for the farmers who provide us with their precious crops, be they in India, Africa or Timbuktu! Also to be 'trusted' as offering unbiased ideas and lateral thinking on health and animal management issues, and for not being afraid to think outside the box even if it challenges our current understanding.

I aim to keep prices low and applications diverse so that all animals' owners can afford it and to donate to and support animal causes and those in the community who dare to care beyond the call of duty.

All photographs are reproduced with permission of Karen Ruggles.

For more information on Stop-it-All visit www.karenruggles.co.uk or call 01823 259952.

Overall champion at HOYS with Lord Richard in 1980, aged 17.



In 1976, aged 13 on Stahlberg, a few months before the 'big fall' off another horse that had the heart attack. One of the last times I was physically able to do X Country!



1980, aged 17, Sale GB representative at U21 European U18 champs Germany with Kanzler.

Many thanks to **Equestrian Lifestyle** magazine for their interest.

www.theequestrianmag.co.uk