

Sisters' miracle goat soap

IN JUST 10 months, Hawkesbury sisters, Kirsty McDermott and Alicia Martin, have gone from being a traditional goat breeding family to purveyors of "miracle" products with a devoted clientele.

They say it doesn't surprise them to be confronted by tearfully grateful mothers whose children's eczema has been relieved, or to have girls clamouring for the acne-busting "miracle soap" their friends have been raving about.

Mrs McDermott and Mrs Martin still can't quite believe the success they've seen since their business, SiS Body Products, was registered in October last year.

"We have overshot our goal for our first year already," Mrs McDermott said.

Mrs Martin, and her mother, Ann Milligan, run the Wheego dairy goat stud at East Kurrajong, which the

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Milligan family established in 1977.

They have been showing their goats regularly in NSW since then, and at the Sydney Royal since 1993, where they consistently win broadribbons.

Mrs Martin, who says the goat stud has always been a passion, started toying with the idea of developing a product to use the surplus goat milk from the stud about two years ago.

"I sat down with Kirsty and the idea (of making creams and lotions) just came to us, and we thought, 'let's'," Mrs Martin said.

"Goats' milk has so many properties – it's close to the

skin's pH – and there were no goats' milk creams or lotions in Australia.

"We really wanted to be able to make something that would help people."

Mrs McDermott spent months on the Internet, researching goats' milk and skincare products. She drew on her background in natural therapies, accounting and



marketing, and started to create test products based on natural ingredients.

"A lot of what we do is education. We want to be able to explain to people exactly what is in our products, and why we have used it," she said.

"That's why we're careful about who we let sell our products."

Mrs McDermott and Mrs Martin were not shy about

asking their friends to play "human guinea pigs" for several months before the business was launched, using their feedback to improve their range.

They also spent a long time finding the best ingredients from suppliers.

"We're pretty particular about the quality; it's our name on the line," Mrs Martin said.

As they perfected their product range, the sisters researched the costs associated with starting their business, from insurance to package design.

"Insurance was the hardest," Mrs McDermott said.

"Unless you're a big corporation a lot of places don't want to know you. We shopped around a lot – and got a lot of doors slammed in our faces."

Packaging was a case of trial and error, as handmade labels gave way to

professional designs and colour-coded bottles (and more expense), on the advice of friends.

The sisters said they were daunted by the start-up costs, but never doubted their product.

"If we'd ever thought it wouldn't work, we just wouldn't have been able to do it, but we never even thought for a second it wouldn't – we just did it," Mrs McDermott said.

Despite their confidence, Mrs McDermott and Mrs Martin said they had a tense few months until the Sydney Royal blew away all their doubts.

"We were up some nights until midnight making products, then at our stall from 8am to 7pm," Mrs Martin said.

"Kirsty went away for two days, and I had to call her back, we were so busy.

"The interest was amazing –



Sisters, Alicia Martin, East Kurrajong, and Kirsty McDermott, Wilberforce, with natural beauty products from their business, SiS Body Products.

it just took off so quickly – but I'm glad we could help so many people.

Since the show, word-of-

mouth recommendations from happy customers have seen the business grow rapidly.