

Gallatin Gateway Entrepreneur Tests Natural Insect Repellent in Africa

By Diana Layman



Anybody who's ever spent any time around horses in Montana knows how vulnerable they are to biting flies. For Dianna Lawson, who has spent much of her life around horses and other animals (her local nickname is Dianimal) repelling flies, mosquitoes and other insects has become both a passion and a business.

As head wrangler for the 320 Ranch in the early 90's she pitied the horses, especially foals and wounded or sick animals, for the misery inflicted upon them by the nasty black flies. Moving on to Ted Turner's Flying D ranch, where she worked with over 40 horses for nine years, she got tired of spraying the horses and herself with

noxious chemical repellents and began experimenting with all natural organic ingredients and essential oils to create an insect repellent that would stop the vicious attacking flies.

Starting with cider vinegar as a base and fractionated coconut oil as a stable carrier and adding various combinations of insect repelling and healing oils and extracts, Lawson created an effective, non-sticky, all natural spray for everyday use, called Tri Animals, because it can be used on horses, canines and humans. The solution not only repels flies, it works on ticks, fleas, bedbugs, mosquitoes and even ants.

Tri Animals can be sprayed on bedding and hard surfaces as well. What's more, the properties of the solution, which comes in four, eight and sixteen ounce bottles, selling from about \$7 to \$14, seem to have therapeutic effects on wounds and skin conditions, promoting faster healing and allowing affected areas to be left uncovered and insect free. Lawson also sells the product to stables by the gallon.

"I spend my days shoeing horses and I carry Tri Animals every day for both me and my client's horses. I accidentally discovered the product's healing qualities and I now use it as much for its healing qualities as I do for its insect repelling qualities," said Kevin Morgan a professional farrier from Belgrade. "I use it all year long, but I wouldn't even consider going through a summer season without it."

"Most people don't know that catnip oil is ten times more effective at repelling mosquitoes than DEET. Combined with Cedar-wood and Citronella which also function as mild antiseptics, these three oils form a powerful insect repellent that is easy on both the skin and the environment," noted Lawson. "Over time, and after much experimentation, I also added Marigold, Myrrh, Eucalyptus, Lavender and Tea-Tree oils for their anti-inflammatory, anti-infectious, anti-viral, anti-parasitic, anti-fungal and anti-itch qualities so that the product can be used for general skin-care, sunburns, poison ivy or sumac, and other irritating skin conditions."

Tri Animals soaks in quickly and has a very mild and pleasing citrus scent which is virtually indistinguishable by the human nose after a short period, but repels all kinds of insects including gnats for six to eight hours depending on the level of perspiration experienced. Lawson went through

15 different formulas over about seven years, testing each on both herself and friends, horses, and dogs before perfecting the current formulation. Once she felt comfortable with the product, she decided to take it with her to Africa for an extreme test.

On safari in Zimbabwe in 2005, Lawson brought along enough to give each member of the safari a full bottle. Unfortunately, upon arrival, the group was immediately broken into two smaller units and separated by the professional guides and Lawson was unable to distribute the product to all members of the group. The two units were traveling around the same area, but at different times during the three-week trip.

One hot afternoon, after waiting motionless in the brush for over an hour for the appearance a Cape Buffalo, a bee stung their guide, Lou Hallamore. He was miserable, but unable to do more than futilely scratch at the bite swelling and stinging his thigh. Quietly, Lawson handed him her bottle of Tri Animals, which he sprayed on the bite.

Within a few minutes, the itch and swelling were greatly reduced and the pain was gone. Hallamore smiled gratefully at her and later told her he “forgot all about the bite”. That evening, Lawson gave the extra supply of Tri Animals intended for the other group members to the guides and trackers in her unit.



As the original group was re-united and returned to the US, Lawson heard that many fellow travelers in the other unit came home suffering from African Tick-Bite Fever, a malady common in Africa and similar to Lyme’s Disease, while no one in Lawson’s group suffered either bites or fever. Lawson realized that she had accidentally created a pretty scientific experiment, complete with a control group.

On a return trip in 2007, Hallamore and the trackers were overjoyed to see her. Their first question was whether she had brought any more Tri Animals with her. Hallamore and the trackers had discovered what Lawson already knew from her previous trip - that Tri Animals repelled the microscopic pepper tick, carrier of the African Tick-Bite fever, which besides carrying the disease was difficult to see and rid from the body. Hallamore and the trackers said that they were not bothered by the ticks or any other insects again, until they ran out of the product.



This year while in Africa, Lawson’s group came upon a dead Cape Buffalo covered by thousands of flies and other insects. Just to see what would happen, she sprayed the Tri Animals solution on a section of the buffalo’s carcass. Within seconds an insect-free zone appeared on the animal’s hide as the insects avoided the area coated with the solution. It was clear to everyone present that the Tri Animals solution is effective in a broad variety of situations.

Lawson is an enthusiastic environmentalist, sticking to all natural ingredients and spray bottles that can be recycled. Tri Animals is available locally from the 320

Ranch, Corral Bar, East Slope Anglers, Yellowstone Golf Club, Gateway Exxon and Market, All-West Veterinary Hospital, Cottonwood Veterinary Clinic, Montana Harvest, Bridger Feeds, and Rocky Mountain Supply in both Belgrade and Dillon. It is also sold through the California-based EarthSong Ranch website and at the Farmers Market on Saturdays at the fairgrounds in Bozeman.

Lawson is working on developing a website and hopes to take the product nationwide sometime next year. For more information or investment inquiries, please contact Dianna Lawson at info@tri-animals.com.