



Libby Smith - Herbs for pets

Elaine: So, Libby, how did you come to be here and set this all up.

Libby: We've been here ten years, we bought a holiday home and I think it was my idea originally to bring my two children over to learn French for a year, and we're still here. We haven't gone back.

Elaine: So that's a very long year.

Libby: Yes. So that's why we're here in Brittany. Why did I set up my business for animals? Well, I have always been interested in plants and in the U.K. I ran an aromatherapy practice for five years, and I used to make products for human beings so I know they work and I've just really, over the time, developed my knowledge of herbs. And I worked as a nurse here in France but I found as I got to 50 something inside of me kept pushing me to want to do my, my herbal, my herbal things with animals or humans or or whatever and I started to do some courses at the herbal school at Morlaix called Ca.. Cap Santé which I did the aromatherapy course, I did a general herbal course and it was while I was doing that course really and exploring all that I came up with the idea of herbs work for humans, and I could see them working just as well for animals as well. I've started my business making soaps and pommades, which is a kind of cream or balm for dogs and horses. The range of products that I have help with problems of the skin really of dogs so I have a, a soap for anti-flea, I have a soap for dogs with sensitive skin problems and I have a soap for dogs who, who need a good wash because they smell. Two pommades for dogs, one for healing little cuts and ...

Elaine: A pommade being a sort of lotion, isn't it?

Libby: A pommade is a sort of lotion made with vegetable oils or beeswax and in that I put essential oils and actually I put a bit of bach flower remedy as well in that, to help heal up any wounds on dogs and I have another pommade which is for sensitive skin in dogs, I can't actually claim the word eczema but it is for irritated skin with dogs which a lot of the smaller dogs suffer from problems with irritation.

Elaine: But was it difficult setting up your business or your practice here?

Libby: Setting up the business is complicated in France, I think it's become more complicated. I had to go and explain my idea to various different organisations even though I wasn't looking for any funding and I had to complete a week's course with Chambre de Métiers as well before I could actually register as a business.

Elaine: And how long did all that take?

Libby: It took me about a year or so to actually, from the process of starting with my ideas and to actually, actually registering as a business.

Elaine: But now it is all up and running?



Libby: It's all up and running, yes. I made the decisions. Very interesting and exciting and I am really enjoying it.

Elaine: Now you were saying, obviously, you mentioned dogs, what other animals do you treat? Or do you make treatments for?

Libby: Horses, and I have been asked for chickens and rabbits but I've said not yet. Cats unfortunately are a bit of a tricky customer for me because they don't, their bodies don't deal with essential oils in quite... quite as easily as dogs and horses and humans do.

Elaine: So how does the actual process work?

Libby: If I am making one of my pommades I make, make that obviously with oils and beeswax and the oil that I use is an infusion of flowers or plants that I have collected from the countryside. So one, uh... one of the ones for healing skin has plantain in it which is a plant I collect from the countryside, and it has marigold flowers which I grow here in my garden and then I dry them in my, um, drying unit and I then add organic sunflower oil in a large bottle and I keep that bottle for about three weeks in the dark and I shake it around, agitate it a bit, then I filter it and it is with that filtered oil that I make the pommade, and then to that filtered oil I add things like coconut oil, beeswax, essential oils and bach flower remedies as well. But the French are very, very open to herbal remedies, homeopathic remedies. They love bach flower remedies, um, and I think they like to, they are more open to a gentle, natural form of healing. They'll a... they'll accept that maybe it takes a bit longer but it's actually more in harmony with your body to heal in this way.

Elaine: It doesn't have sort of side effects or breakdown...

Libby: It doesn't have side effects, no, in fact a lot of the herbal remedies act on actually boosting your natural immunity. I don't like using chemicals with my own animals really and I don't really like the, the pipettes you get that stay in the system for about a month or so in the blood system.

Elaine: So do you need to see if somebody contacts you and says well, er my dog is sort of scratching himself here, or he's got this sore that won't heal over. Do you need to see the animal or can you just...

Libby: No, I can, I can, um, as long as the person gives me a good description of the problem I can prescribe something from that, or suggest something. But, I mean obviously if someone can always e-mail me with some photos, that's even better for me, but I don't need to physically see the animal, no. I had, um, what they call a pop up shop just before Christmas in Saint Briec and the big problem was that people kept wanting to buy the products to use on themselves, which at the moment I didn't have the license for but I was explaining I am going to get the license for some of them.

Elaine: Well, that's handy. A joint, a joint thing. Dogs and humans.

Libby: Yes.

Elaine: They can all bath together.

Libby: Yes.



Elaine: Put the children in as well.

Libby: They are, they are good quality natural products so I think people recognise that when they see it. So as far as possible I use all organic ingredients with it and I try and keep the packaging down as low as possible as well.

Elaine: I can see that actually, you've got your mailboxes but they are, you know, again, eco friendly aren't they.

Libby: Yes.

Elaine: And can be recycled. So what is the way forward, Libby?

Libby: Well, I was explaining that probably more horse products for I will start to develop this year but I don't think they will be ready until next year. Because it obviously takes a time for people to test them for me and have feedback and I have to adjust them according to that, so, uh, but eventually I would like to have a shop and possibly an area where people can come and learn how to make their products for themselves at home, so that is way off in the future.

Elaine: So how can people get hold of you to order, or to go to buy one of the products that are made, or the soap?

Libby: I have a Facebook page, which is Libby Smith Aromatics, which I have a shop on the Facebook page which I am hoping is working because it's very new or you can always telephone me on my mobile phone which is 06 42 50 33 48, and I have a website as well with the shop on it as well which is libbysmitharomatics.fr.

Elaine: Excellent. Thank you very much it's been really interesting talking to you and I have to say to our listeners the gorgeous, gorgeous smells here in Libby's laboratory. It really is a lovely aroma and beautifully should be called aromatherapy. Beautiful perfume. Thank you, Libby.