

# Chili factor pays off

MURRAY JOHNSON

**A**S A small business operator Yvonne Huggins is used to sticking her neck out and taking a chance on new products.

But little did she realise a holiday in the United States nine years ago would prove to be such a profitable experience thanks to a super cool product.

While holidaying in Hawaii she and a girlfriend visited Honolulu - and struck liquid gold.

"It was a really hot day and we went to a big flea market near Pearl Harbor," recalls Ms Huggins.

"We walked around in the sweltering heat, and saw a big crowd around one particular stand.

"Being a sticky beak I went over and there were two big drums of ice-cold water with black tubes that looked like snakes bobbing around.

"These 'snakes' and money were changing hands at a furious pace," she said.

The product so in demand that day was an ice-cold cloth collar containing space-age crystals which expand 900 times in volume when exposed to water.

After soaking up water, the collars work by creating a chill factor as water evaporates around the neck. Ms Huggins was hooked. She returned to the market the next day and the stall owner gave her the manufacturer's phone number



**So cool:** Yvonne Huggins models one of her Cool Collars which she discovered while on holiday.

Ms Huggins, who runs a fairy shop in Bright, decided to add the Cool Collars to her range.

"I'm a dressmaker by trade, so I came up with my own design," she said.

"At first it was difficult to sell such a new product. No-one knew what they were.

"But once I sold them I found word of mouth kicked in, and the orders rolled in.

"Since then I've developed a range of products using the crystals. I've created a \$5 cooler that fits inside a hat or helmet.

"A lot of people thought it **would be rood** to have one you could use

as an icepack for sporting injuries, so I developed that too.

"I came up with cool wrist wraps, and cool packs to ease the burning sensations felt by people with multiple sclerosis and shingles."

Diabetics use the collars to keep insulin needles cool while other customers use them to treat stings, swelling, burns and hot flushes associated with chemotherapy and menopause.

"I've made stubby holders for beer drinkers, and cool cushions for tired feet," Ms Huggins said.

"Migraine sufferers find them helpful for headaches too."

Ms Huggins has known dog lovers use them to keep sensitive pets cool in summer.

Australian soldiers even ordered khaki versions to match their jungle greens on service in East Timor.

Cool Collars sell for \$10.95 including CAST. They can be cooled in the fridge or freezer, or heated in a microwave to treat injuries.

"I chucked one in the microwave to see what would happen," Ms Huggins said.

"I'm one of these trial and error people. The first time I did it the collar caught on fire, because I hadn't wet it enough, but I sorted that out."

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