

**“ Good night, sleep tight
Don't let the bed bugs bite.”**



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wiser to ask for an expert's help.**

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Out of the dragons' den Nattaro Labs

Chance plays a big part in most of our lives. This was certainly the case for four individuals, none of whom knew each other beforehand, who were thrown together on an entrepreneur's course in Sweden. From this chance encounter rose Nattaro Labs. The company, which fell into pest control totally by accident, is now making its mark worldwide as **Pest** editor, Frances McKim discovered.

In 2010, when four very bright but unemployed individuals signed up to the Entrepreneur programme, run by the Life Science/Mobile Heights Business Center in Lund Sweden, the thought that they would now be running a global business selling bed bug products never crossed their minds.

Between them though, they each had previous experience in a variety of different fields. Of the four, both Carl-Magnus Hansson and Magnus Bäckmark had worked for several years for Sony Ericsson. Christine Dahlman Jacobsen, an economist by training, was previously a key account manager for an IT company. But what was eventually to bring them altogether was biologist Dr Camilla Ryne. She had done her PhD in the Pheromone group at Lund University before transferring to Professor Michael T Siva-Jothy's department at Sheffield University, where her interest in the chemical ecology of bed bugs was ignited.

From her pheromone research, which coincided with the upsurge of bed bug infestations the world over, Camilla could see product development opportunities but lacked the commercial skills to develop her ideas. With her business acumen, Christine was asked to help Camilla prepare a business plan. Called in to help was Magnus with his long experience of product development and Carl-Magnus to use his expertise in industrialisation.

So in April 2011 Nattaro Labs came into being. For those of us who don't speak Swedish, Nattaro literally translated, means 'Good night's sleep'. The founders' vision was to create a company based on innovation, producing products with sustainable design and production.

As is frequently the case with start-up companies, funding is a critical issue. Up until 2012 it was very much FFF-funding, namely Family, Friends and Fools. However Christine, whilst still completing her masters degree in entrepreneurship, put her skills to work and entered a regional business plan competition where Nattaro was selected amongst the ten best. Another success was winning a 'Dragon's Den' type competition at the university – all good publicity – which helped gain attention when pitching for real for funds from potential investors.

Their biggest triumph came in 2016 when Nattaro was selected to the prestigious '33 List', by leading business and technology magazines *Affärsvärlden* and *Ny Teknik*. Not awarded lightly, this is a list of Swedish companies offering an innovative product with 'game changer' international potential. Today funding is a



Above: the original team Christine Dahlman Jacobsen, Magnus Bäckmark, Dr Camilla Ryne and Carl-Magnus Hansson
Right: Dr Jette Knudsen



mix of private and public financing with a growing number of shareholders.

But, just as fate brought this original quartet together, fate dealt them a tragic blow. During the autumn of 2011, Dr Camilla Ryne, the scientific brains behind the developments, fell ill and eventually died of cancer in summer 2012. A whole year elapsed until further funding was secured and Dr Jette Knudsen, a colleague of Camilla's, was recruited. Today Jette is the company's chief scientist.

In 2015 Carl-Johan Gustafson was headhunted and joined Nattaro as its CEO. Today there are a total of eight employed in the company which is located at Medicon Village, situated in the Ideon Science Park in the old university town of Lund in southern Sweden.

If Nattaro and their products appeal to you, they are now looking to recruit someone to strengthen their growing international sales....

Products developed

Discussions with students in university accommodation led to the first product, Nattaro Safe – the bed bug tape. The patented Nattaro Safe is a roll of folded paper with a self-adhesive back. Inside is a thin layer of diatomaceous earth (DE).

As DE is classified as a biocide Nattaro has now got registrations in several European countries but, regrettably, not yet the UK. The second major product, Nattaro Scout, has taken seven years to bring to market. This bed bug detection trap, pictured above with Nattaro's Carl-Johan Gustafson and Christine Dahlman Jacobsen, contains a unique blend of bed bug pheromones simulating a bed bug aggregation. Today it is sold by distributor partners across the globe.

