Small cattle could be big business for an astute Nar Nar Goon North woman. Alison Livermore told Danny Buttler she hopes miniature Herefords could become a regular feature of the rural landscape.
ESS may be more when it comes to Herefords.
The famous British cattle breed is now available in a new compact, easy to handle size, just right for today's busy hobby farmer.

Alison Livermore, who runs the 28-acre Winnmore Stud in Nar Nar Goon North with partner John Murphy, believes the stumpy-legged versions of the standard Hereford - the back of a bull comes up to about waist height - could be more than just a novelty animal that keeps the grass down...

Alison sees miniature Hereford breeding as a way to make better use of smaller acreages that are often used as little more than rest homes for sheep.

"All these little hobby farms that are around, they could be viable little businesses, so that land doesn't have to sit there and do nothing," she said.

For the past five years, Alison has moved from experimenting with the cattle to spreading the gospel of the bantam bovines. It was a big step into little cows for Alison's parents, Douglas and Margaret who were fruit growers at their "Winmore" property in Vermont, before pioneering kiwi spreading the gospel of the bantam bovines.

"Little Island, little state, little cows - it was like that," Alison said.

As fertility gradually pervades in the paddock is that pastures can be made from the small animals, who need something to keep the grass down - but some (miniature Herefords) got to 68 per cent of the animal's weight.

"Normally you get 50 per cent meat and 50 per cent all the other bits - bone and head and what-have-you - but some (miniature Herefords) got to 68 per cent of meat because they haven't got the advantages of these great long legs and great big heads," she said.

"While their bodies are smaller, they are still nuggety compact things. That's why I think they are viable as an animal, because you are not wasting resources growing something that is going to be used as fertiliser.

Alison bought her first stock from a friend who calls it "mini-Hereford" or three is the answer.

I am in an area surrounded by a whole lot of little properties, some are only a couple of acres, some are 60 acres, and a lot of people don't want to handle big cattle and they don't have the facilities anyway," she said.

These guys fitted the bill, as far as I was concerned, for a whole lot of hobby farmers who need something to keep the grass down or to cross graze with their horses, to put in the freezer or to have as pets - because these guys are really cute.

An advantage of having a smaller grazer in the paddock is that pastures can be better preserved when climatic conditions would otherwise make it impossible.

With two sudden winters behind us, many farmers would attest to the damage that the cows can inflict.

The miniature Hereford was originally bred in the US, where a Texan family decided the super-sizing of cattle was getting out of control in the 1960s. The smaller breed is now a recognised category in the world of cattle officialdom.

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