

Miniature Herefords are the perfect fit for Mornington Peninsula lifestyle

By Kim Woods

The COVID trend of moving out of the city to a small acreage farm has resulted in a mini boom for Miniature Hereford steers and breeding females.

Herefords are classed as miniature Herefords if the animal is registered with HAL and their frame score is 1 or less at age 3 years (124cm at the hip for bulls and 119cm for cows). There is no official minimum frame size.

Michele Smith operates Tulum Gully Miniature Herefords at Balnarring on Victoria's Mornington Peninsula, and is observing the flow of city residents snapping up peri-urban acreages and investing in the miniature cattle breed.

Michele had moved to the Peninsula in 2015 to a 12 hectare property to run horses and cattle with her husband.

"Because it is smaller acreage, I looked into miniature cattle and came across the Australian Miniature Hereford Breeders Network (AMHBN). I found them to be invaluable as a small group of passionate members from around Australia," she said.

"Through this group I have been able to purchase cattle, have amazing mentors and learn."

"I started with two joined cows with calves and my herd has now grown to 12 with my own bull, and the herd is registered with Herefords Australia."

When it came to running bulls for the first time, Michele considered her options and chose to lease a bull, followed by the use of artificial insemination and finally purchasing her own bull for natural joinings.

Michele advises potential mini cattle owners to have a good standard of fencing or electric fencing, and source a high quality, registered bull with good conformation and temperament.

"For those first starting out it would be a good idea to lease a bull - I found the AI program quite involved and had to use an AI technician."

"There is currently a very high demand for registered miniature Herefords - people can refer to the website for a list of registered breeders or contact the group directly on amhbnsecretary@gmail.com, stating what they are looking for and where they are located."

Michele joins her heifers at 18 months of age over a 12-week period, supplementing the breeders with oaten hay for an autumn calving.

She rotationally grazes the cows and calves, and bull separately around four paddocks, and due to the property size, her herd is at maximum numbers. She had a small set of yards built and does all the husbandry work herself.

"Because I do have a small acreage, I can't separate them by distance. The calves are vaccinated with three seven-in-one injections in a year, drenched, ear tagged, tattooed, run on improved pastures and fed hay."

Animal welfare is important to Michele as many members of the public like to

stop to look at the calves playing in the roadside paddock.

"When you start off, it is important to have a vet for professional advice - some of the more confident members can do the procedures themselves but I am guided by a vet two to three times a year. He has gotten to know my cattle and it is another good way of learning."

Michele has decided not to show her cattle but sells her cattle through the AMHBN network.

She has sold a weaner heifer for breeding while the weaner steers have been sold onto small block owners as pets or grass eaters. She also keeps her freezer full with tasty, tender grass fed beef.

She said COVID fast-tracked the exodus of urban residents to the peri-urban areas with many local properties being sold sight unseen, and inquiries for Miniature Herefords fielded through social media and the AMHBN.

"If you have a few acres and would like the pleasure of owning a couple of beautiful red and white cows, or maybe breeding some calves, I suggest you look at Miniature Herefords."

Potential breeders can also visit the Australian Miniature Herefords Cattle Association at www.miniatureherefords.org.au for information on breed standards and animal sales.

Clean sweep for Paragon at Albany

Paragon Miniature Hereford stud had a clean sweep of the specialty breed section at the 2021 Albany Agricultural Show in Western Australia.

Stud principal Denise Warner exhibited the senior champion interbreed bull and senior champion speciality breed bull judged by Lachlan Fry.

Paragon also exhibited the reserve junior champion speciality breed bull, senior champion speciality breed female, junior champion speciality female and reserve junior champion speciality female.



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1. A mature Miniature Hereford cow offers docility and a small frame size for peri-urban farmers.
2. Miniature Hereford bulls can be leased or purchased for natural joinings.
3. A new born Miniature Hereford calf at Tulum Gully stud. Images Michele Smith