



# Farming on a small scale

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IT WAS THE HUNT FOR something profitable that would suit a small acreage which led Julie Stott to Miniature Herefords.

That was about 17 years ago – and even though Ms Stott has moved from a 10 hectare (25 acre) block to 101ha (250ac) at O’Connell in NSW’s Central West, she still keeps the miniatures.

She is breeding for poll genetics these days due to market demand.

A big cull last year saw her sell any cattle that had horns or were predisposed to horns.

DNA testing helped her sort out which of the cattle had the poll gene.

The cull left her with 20 cattle – the rest were sold to market or small-area farmers.

Ms Stott (pictured above and below) said she took this big step as she was previously having to dehorn the cattle to suit the market, a practice she wasn’t fond of.

“People like polled animals better, they are easier to sell... so I wanted naturally polled animals,” Ms Stott said.

“People on small farms like polls better, as does the market.”

A lot of cattle Ms Stott breeds go to the hobby or small-acreage farmer market – some wanting them as pets.

“The leftovers go to the local cattle sales and I get the same price per kilo as the bigger guys, I just don’t have the kilograms, but I don’t get penalised on price,” Ms Stott said.

This ability to sell the cattle she didn’t want at market was one of the reasons she went with

Miniature Herefords over other enterprises or breeds.

Ms Stott got miniatures because of her original small block size and also because they didn’t tend to damage wet paddocks as much as their bigger counterparts.

“You can have at least two little ones to each big one,” Ms Stott said.

“We’ve just come out of a nine year drought and (the Miniature Herefords) looked good through it, because they eat less.”

This wasn’t to say Ms Stott didn’t have to supplementary feed – she did, but she said the smaller cattle handled it well simply because they didn’t require the same amount of feed.

“They require the same management as any other cow – drenching etc, the same management practices,” Ms Stott said.

She runs her own Miniature Hereford bull and imports semen from a breeder in Tasmania to ensure she has new bloodlines.

Her original bloodlines came from the US.

In 1996 Ms Stott went on a trip to America to import embryos and semen and she got her first drop of cattle in 1998.

“At the time I had a small property to run and I wanted

something profitable, I looked at Lowlines but I’ve always liked Herefords.”

She said the market for the Miniature Herefords remained steady.

“A lot of people keep and want them for pets and some people buy the steers to grow them out.

“In the US there is a big market for ‘locker’ meat – that is beef you can fit in the freezer.”

Ms Stott also runs Boer goats and a handful of Dorpers on her property.

“I have 80 Boer goats for weed management,” Ms Stott said.

“They keep things nice and eat the weeds.”

They are sent to an abattoir at Oberon and while Ms Stott said she doesn’t get the same price returns as she’d get for sheep, the goats were easier to look after.

“They don’t give as good a return as sheep, but they are easy to look after – you just need to have good fences.

“I don’t sell any pedigree, I just sell what I don’t need.

“Carcoar has a (goat) sale four times a year, so I sell any extra there.”

Ms Stott runs 10 Dorpers as well for the meat.

There is also a farm stay on the property.

