



The future for small beef cattle looks promising, due to their reputation for efficient grass conversion (more kg of meat produced per hectare), increase in higher value cuts per hectare, better fertility, higher stocking rates and the cuts being more in line with recommended portion sizes.

These facts look even more appealing in the face of the current reports into the impact of red meat production on the environment. One such breed is the miniature Herefords which originated in America at the Points of Rock ranch in Fort Davis, Texas after many years of careful breeding selection by the Largeant family.

These loveable cute cattle also have the added bonus to the smallholder of being docile, easy to calf, early maturing, easier on fields and fences and, as well as having a natural marbling to their meat, are a lot easier to fit in the freezer than their larger ancestors.

The Miniature Herefords were created due to the hard work and dedication of a father and son partnership. Rust Largeant, the father, who was disillusioned by the trend to just look at the size of cattle in the show ring and his son, Roy Largeant III, it appears was driven by a more practical problem.

Roy was tasked with doing a lot of the butchery on the farm and commented many times after an exhausting day hauling 190lb quarters of beef onto the hooks in the cooler that he wished the bullocks were half the size.

Then in the summer of 1970, at the age of 15, he convinced his father to let him have five of the smallest cows and a bull and began breeding miniatures. It was understandably quite a long process and the first true miniature bull wasn't born until 1981.

Even though these miniature cattle



Our 7/8th Hereford Delilah that is about to have the first of our fourth generation calves

were created nearly 38 years ago, there are still relatively few of them in the world today. They have become increasingly popular in America, Canada and Australia, but there are still very few of them in the UK and Europe. Mainly due to the import regulations and the difficulties and costs involved with the use of the embryo transfer option.

“These loveable cute cattle also have the added bonus to the smallholder of being docile”

So a couple from Shropshire have decided to take their own route to breeding these incredibly cute and docile natured breed of cattle.

Over the 12 months we will follow Nick and Helen Forsyth throughout the farming year on their 150-acre farm, where they keep miniature Hereford cattle alongside their pedigree Shropshire and Blue Faced Leicester sheep, contract pig rearing unit and 60 acres of arable land.

This couple have not always been farming, they only bought the farm just over four years ago, three weeks before the arrival of their second child, two-and-a-half years after into their marriage and only just over three years after they met.

Not long after they were married they were lucky enough to be able to rent a few acres and sheds off a neighbour while they both continued working, Nick in the family sign business and Helen as a paramedic.

It was at this point they decided to embark on their mission to breed miniature Hereford cattle by grading up from a small nucleus herd of pedigree dexter heifers that they purchased along side their first pedigree miniature Hereford bull Chater Valley Charlie.

With the imminent arrival of the first of their fourth generation calves due the end of April, they are now well on their way to producing purebred miniature Hereford Cattle.

In our next edition we will hear about their journey so far as they prepare for the start of this year's calving season.