



## Miniature Cattle for Hobby Farmers

**Small cattle can eat less, take up less space and look cute, too. See if one of these miniature cattle breeds is for you.**

By Sue Weaver

Photos courtesy Lonnie & Gloria Hoover, Chigger Ridge Exotics

These Zebu Cattle, Little Chieftan (a bull, at top) and Mary Lynn and calf (bottom), are 33 inches and 37 inches tall, respectively.

If you'd rather raise conventional cattle but still turn heads, investigate diminutive breeds like Dexters, Belfairs and Miniature Zebus (Lowlines and Miniature Jersey's, too).

Miniature bovines are taking the country by storm, and rightfully so.

They're the perfect, pocket-size cattle for hobbyists, family dairy cow keepers, and specialty-beef entrepreneurs. There are so many breeds to choose from!

Here are a few to consider.

### Lowlines

Lowlines are miniature beef cattle developed at the Trangie Agricultural Research Centre in Australia.

They are purebred Angus 30 to 60 percent smaller in stature than their full-size (Highline) cousins.

Proponents claim Lowlines require only one-third as much feed as full-size Angus to produce 70 percent of the rib-eye area of beef cattle twice their size, making them an up-and-coming favorite breed for organic, grass-fed and other gourmet beef raisers.

[www.usa-lowline.org](http://www.usa-lowline.org)

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### Miniature Jerseys

One of the most popular, yet one of the rarest breeds of miniature dairy cattle is the Miniature Jersey.

These teensy, doe-eyed wonders are only 38" to 42" tall, yet many produce two to four gallons of the same rich, creamy milk standard-size Jerseys are famous for, each and every day.

Also known as the Barnyard Jersey, Island Jersey, Rabbit-eyed Jersey and Guinea Jersey, the Miniature Jersey was bred to Dexter cattle to produce a dual-purpose dairy and beef breed called the Belfair or Irish Jersey.

[www.miniaturejerseyassociation.com](http://www.miniaturejerseyassociation.com)

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### Dexters

Dexters are an ancient breed descended from the wee Celtic cattle of ancient Eire.

Once listed as a rare breed by the American Livestock Breeds Conservancy, the Dexter is making a remarkable comeback. There are roughly 6,000 Dexters in North America and perhaps 15,000 worldwide.

Dexters were developed as triple-purpose cattle raised for milk, meat and draft power and they still fulfill these niches today. Hobby drovers love cute and classy black, red or dun Dexter oxen with their neat white horns tipped in black.

Dexter beef is fine-textured, tender and delicious and productive Dexter cows milk 1.5 to 2.5 gallons of 4 percent butterfat per day. Mature Dexter cows stand no less than 36" tall nor more than 42" tall measured at the shoulder; bulls can be no



smaller than 38" and no taller than 44" when full grown.

[www.purebreddextercattle.org](http://www.purebreddextercattle.org)

<http://dextercattle.org>

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#### Miniature Zebus

Zebus (*Bos indicus*) are Asian hump-backed cattle like the familiar Brahman of rodeo fame; there are at least 40 breeds of Zebu cattle in India alone.

Miniature Zebu resemble their larger kin with a twist: their ears aren't floppy and miniature cows have smaller humps.

Zebus are arguably the tiniest of the miniature breeds; they do not exceed 42" tall at maturity and many measure less than 34" tall!

[www.americanminiaturezebuassociation.org](http://www.americanminiaturezebuassociation.org)

[www.miniature-zebu-cattle.com](http://www.miniature-zebu-cattle.com)

[www.imza.name](http://www.imza.name)

If these breeds don't tickle your fancy, consider: Miniature Herefords; the score and more of miniature breeds registered by the International Miniature Cattle Breeds Registry; or Sundog Toy Cattle. You could also raise miniature Longhorns, miniature Highlands, miniature Watusi, and even miniature bucking bulls.

Think different; think small. Cute, popular and productive, miniature cattle might well be the perfect small-farm cattle for you.

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This article first appeared as part of "Alternative Bovidae," by Sue Weaver. To read the entire article in Popular Farming Series: Cattle, which offers in-depth articles on raising cattle, types of cattle, cattle behavior, cattle health and more. You can buy a copy online or find one in a farm supply store near you.