

# Saugeen River CSA

## Newsletter

October 2018

Hello everyone,

Selling the horses was not a decision that came easily, nor was it welcomed. Life circumstances have made it necessary, however. Probably the biggest impact is having three extreme weather seasons in a row: draught, floods, draught. This is wearing me down both physically and financially. Hay was very poor quality last year and very low yield this year. I don't have enough hay to feed all my animals this winter, and with the lower yields of vegetable crops this year, I am very tight financially, so buying hay is not possible. This reality, combined with questioning my ability to continue farming with horses, made selling them the most reasonable option.

It is morbidly ironic that my reaction to these potentially climate change caused extremes, is to use more fossil fuels. It is not impossible to farm with horses, but the reality, that I have been fighting the entire time I have been working with draft horses, is that they require more management and labour surrounding them. Horses beg for community. I'm the only farm manager that I know trying to farm as complex an operation with horses on my own. Any other horse powered farm has one person focused on the horses, and at least one other person able to focus on other aspects of the farm. This isn't just labour, it's management, carrying capacity. Managing the farm on my own has never been my ideal, but the complex challenges around having a co-manager have not been overcome.

What has allowed me to manage the horses solo (by the seat of my pants really) up to this point was having an amazing lead horse, Molly, who was the closest thing to a business partner I've had since 2005. When she died this spring, she left a gap that I was not able to fill. She helped keep the herd of horses in line. Without her here, I had a hard time managing them on top of all the other aspects of the farm that require daily/hourly attention. This past year, with the latest spring I've experienced, it was necessary to get some jobs done very quickly. I had to make the decision on a daily basis, as to whether I use the tractor or the horses for certain jobs. As I was under so much pressure this season, I chose the tractor most of the time. Horses that are not working regularly often are harder to get back into the rhythm of work and it can take some time just doing a simple task, especially in vegetable growing, since many jobs need a calm, precise frame of mind. Having work horses that aren't working does them a disservice.

I still have all the horse equipment, which I can keep in storage in working condition, so if circumstances change, if the stars align, and someone comes along who wants to help manage this farm, horses can be purchased again and worked with, but as long as I am managing on my own, that ideal will have to wait. In the meantime, for next season, with the horses gone, I will be able to focus more attention on the crops.

Thank you all for your continued support, community is still the hope,  
Cory