

Home Quarter Farm Life



SEEDS OF ENCOURAGEMENT

Tips to downsize to move off the farm

Have a target in mind for moving off the farmyard and a plan for decluttering



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The number 2020 stares at me from the flip chart paper on my kitchen wall. This farm coach is being coached to set timelines for moving off our farmyard to make room for our successor to live on the main yard. I have four harvests left to get things chucked, sorted, and packed for a new home.

Michelle Wright of www.Videospaces.ca has crafted a niche business of "heirloom rescuing" and "money wrangling" helping farm folks in northeastern Alberta make the transition to a new lifestyle.

Here are Wright's tips:

1. Get started by focusing on the farm piece. In our case, the farm is staying in the family, just new faces in the yard. For farm folks who are vacating and selling, they have more layers of issues. Finances, organization, and making transitional plans.

2. List out the many things that you want to accomplish.

Wright works at the kitchen table and builds relationships with the landowners. She can remove firearms since she has her firearms safety certificate. She is on a first-name basis with the landfill folks and has trained to remove hazardous materials and dangerous goods. She knows the correct disposal for lots of stuff and has metal guys who clear up bush loads of steel and iron and take it away. Their fee is usually the value of the load on the trailer.

3. Know your social service network. Many adult children live far away from the home farm that is up for sale, and they don't want to be driving or flying "home" every weekend of their precious summer to be dealing with all of mom and dad's possessions (a.k.a. junk)! Wright lines up social service connections and food banks locally that can benefit from the household effects.

4. Have realistic expectations. Farmers rarely move. Over the course of 40 to 60 years they can accumulate a pile of stuff. Wright feels you need 18 months to downsize. She coaches her families gently over and over again saying, "Let go." Letting go is a coaching strategy. You need to be able to let go of things so that you can create new space for a new chapter in

your life. Wright is careful to ask, "Where are your treasures?" and learns the story about the objects. When the clients say, "I am not ready to let go," then Wright asks, "What are you ready for?"

5. Get another perspective on your stuff. Wright has downsized a grain bin full of used washing machines. The objection from the hoarder was, "if something breaks I might need a part!" Imagine all the generations of stuff in layers in the farmhouse basement. Give treasures to grandkids, and share the story of that treasure while you are alive.

As a home economist who enjoys practical repurposing of found objects, I am drawn to decluttering articles and books. The hot one on the market these days, which I have read is *The Life-Changing Magic of Tidying up: The Japanese Art of Decluttering and Organizing*, by Marie Kondo.

Kondo starts with clothes first, by discarding all at once, intensely and completely. I know that when my aunt died, my uncle could not move a thing, even five years later when it was his turn to move to a new home. Do your family a favour by making large donations to the local thrift store.

Have a picture on the fridge

of your new home or ideal new location. A vision of what you are moving toward can inspire you to keep throwing away or giving away the pieces of your old life chapter that you don't need to carry along. My mother-in-law set up an eight-foot table that was the FREE zone, and each time she had visitors, they had to scan the table for treasures to take home with them. Her large book collection was a great gift to lifelong learners who appreciated her generosity.

Keeping up the energy for sorting, tossing and giving is hard. That is why we have offered to help elderly women in our community. You could do this in your rural community to help folks move on.

I have deep emotional connections to stuff - my age five black and white oxford shoes are in my freezer room on a rafter. They don't bring me joy, but a photo of them would likely be more realistic to keep. Don Aslett, author of *Clutters Last Stand*, says we keep too much evidence junk, like old university papers or textbooks. I donated old trophies to the local school to repurpose. It takes time and effort to give things away!

Kondo suggests that "during

the selection process, if you come across something that does not spark joy but that you just can't bring yourself to throw away, stop for a moment and ask yourself, "Am I having trouble getting rid of this because of an attachment to the past or because of a fear for the future?" Our ownership patterns reflect what we value. My sister is a minimalist, and when she moves, I, the older sister get a lot of furniture, pillows, and mirrors that she no longer cares about. Why does my house become the holding tank for deceased relative's possessions and my sister's former things?

Borrow Kondo's book from your library and be inspired to start downsizing. Leaving a tidy estate is a great gift to your heirs. Taking the things with you that bring joy will bless your new home in town and give you a fresh start for the next chapter beyond the farm.

Let me know how it goes. I need tips and action to get stuff sorted. Four years is going to fly by, and my daughter-in-law will appreciate a clean slate in 2020. -/

Elaine Froese has lived on her farmyard for 34 years. Author of three books, and a professional speaker, Elaine wants her words to leave legacy. Visit www.elainefroese.com. "like" her on Facebook at "farmfamily coach."