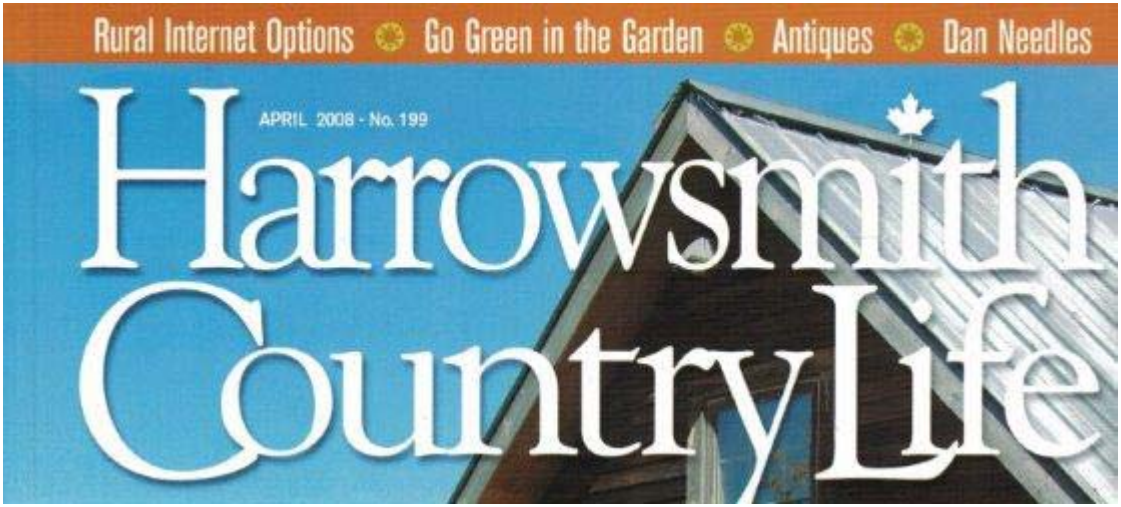


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# Harrowsmith CountryLife



# High-Speed in Cow Country

**W**hen it comes to internet access, you'd think that, as the editor of a national, fancy-schmancy magazine like *HARROWSMITH*, I would have all the latest on-line techno wizardry at my fingertips. But folks, the truth is I'm still on dial-up.

At least I'm not alone. Thousands of other rural, work-at-home internet customers, many of whom—like me—rely on e-mail to do their jobs, have yet to graduate beyond basic dial-up service. We are a patient breed, willing to wait dutifully for what seems like hours to download jpegs and other files that are a mere hiccup in a high-speed inbox. Likewise, we hesitate to use the internet for research for fear of logging on to a site with so many pictures that the screen freezes. Forget shopping on-line. Forget electronic banking. Forget iTunes. And believe it or not, we have yet to see YouTube.

It's not that we rural dwellers are content to live in the cyber Stone Age, but as many are so painfully aware, the alternatives to dial-up continue to be rare and expensive. Alas, cable is unheard of in the countryside, and wireless and satellite cost a fortune. Meanwhile, Ma Bell has yet to make

good on her promise to offer high-speed to everyone, rural or urban. Interestingly, I have friends in Grey County, Ontario, who subscribe to a local phone company (one that remains steadfastly independent of Bell) that has provided high-speed to the farm since Day One, and likewise, certain rural jurisdictions have made a big deal about providing the necessary infrastructure. Indeed, all of Nantuxut has high-speed but here I am, an hour and a half east of Toronto, out of luck unless I'm willing to pay through the nose for wireless or satellite.

**Somewhere, somehow, there has to be good rural internet service.**

That's why it's heartening to hear about Andreas Wiatowski, a 36-year-old computer wizard who returned to country life three years ago to be closer to family when his dad fell ill. Like me, Andreas was appalled at the dearth and expense of rural internet options, but with his extensive background in web development and network consultation, he saw this as a business opportunity. From their home in Harley, a crossroads hamlet between Brantford and

Woodstock in southwestern Ontario, Andreas and his wife, Cynthia, are at the helm of a small company that provides high-speed wireless internet service to a rural client base using—wait for it—local silos and grain elevators (not communications towers) as the all-important high points from which its signal is beamed.

What's more, the Wiatowski's Silo Wireless does this for a bargain price. Their basic service costs only \$99 to install and \$29 monthly, which is about 40 percent of the going rate for wireless and

