

# Waterkloof Estate welcomes another Percheron

Waterkloof Estate near Somerset West in the Western Cape, where a golden thread of sustainability runs right through every aspect of the farm, has welcomed a new 'green machine' in its stable, Black Jack. Completing the estate's Percheron seven, this thoroughbred gelding is the latest addition to aid to the farm's bio-dynamic farming and non-interventionist practices.

With soil preparation and cultivation - ranging from ridging, spraying, ploughing and sowing - part of their job description, Waterkloof's Percheron brigade not only improves the structure and quality of the soils, but also reduces the farm's carbon footprint by relying on fewer heavy machines and tractors in and around the vineyards.

"Each Percheron horse is capable of covering eight hectares of the farm and draws a unique hitch cart that was specially designed for the spaces between the vineyards, and features attachments for ploughing, spraying, carrying compost and containers for grapes. Each horse has its own handler and together the two of them are responsible for those eight hectares," explains Christiaan Loots, Waterkloof farm manager.

## Estate is a holistic entity

"The feisty seven year old Black Jack is a high calibre Percheron and all too eager to get trotting and tilling and take bio-dynamic farming in his stride. Thanks to his previous owners, he needs little training and already knows what to do on the farm. Percherons only mature at the age of seven, therefore Black Jack is in his prime and will be a good influence on the rest of our horses," adds Loots.

The entire estate is treated as a holistic entity and Waterkloof steers clear of conventional pesticides and fertilisers. In addition to utilising pure horse power in the vineyards, Waterkloof also uses the manure of its own Jersey cows for fertilising the vines, Dorper sheep and chickens. In addition to the cow dung, they use the straw from their horse stables, the grape skins and stems from their cellar, eggshells and natural scraps from their restaurant, and weeds amongst the fynbos to create their own compost.