

SAWMILL FORUM

CASEY
CREAMER

SAW
DOCTOR



Hi Casey, I have been a fan of yours for years and just bought another book because the first was falling apart. I have owned a small sawmill since I was a young man, and am just finishing up starting it back up. What I was hoping you could help me with is how to size and place the board splitter. Any advice? I attached two photos of the mill; these were taken before I started.

The splitter should be located as close to the rim of the saw as possible to avoid the problem of shims sneaking in between the splitter and the log and pinching the saw. If all of your saws are not the same diameter, mount it so that it works for the biggest one, or create a way to adjust it for different size saws. Just make sure that there is no way for it to get loose and get tangled up with the saw on a gig back. I would rather have it be the wrong distance from your smallest saw than risk the possibility that in making it adjustable, you made it somewhat less secure. The same thinking would hold true for the alignment of the splitter. It would be nice if the alignment was adjustable, but only if you can do it in a way that is completely secure and stable with no risk of unwanted movement.

The splitter should be aligned so that it is as close to the cut cant as possible without touching it. This alignment

should be done after you have set the lead in the saw because that determines where the back of the saw will be and also determines where the cut face of the cant will be. I would also say that the log side of the splitter should line up pretty well with the log side of the saw. This way, what puts pressure on the board is the difference between the kerf and the thickness of your splitter.

What you are trying to accomplish is to align the splitter so that it puts a minimal amount of pressure on the board as it is being cut so that the board doesn't pinch or rub the saw in any way. Part of that is to prevent the saw from heating, but the other part is to prevent the loose board from being caught by the upswing of the back of the blade which would instantly launch it in the direction of the sawyer at about 100 MPH. Of course your offbearer--or offbearer belt in the case of a so called automatic mill--also has an important role to play in preventing boards from being thrown at the sawyer or sawyer's booth.

According to your pictures I see another possible problem that you may already be planning to address. But just in case, I want to make sure that you are planning to set the mill up inside a building. We all know that equipment like that would do better being out of the rain and snow, but what a few

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people don't know is that trying to run a sawmill while the blade is in direct sunlight is a huge problem.

Remember that the thing we are most trying to prevent is heating the saw. There are many ways for the saw to take on unwanted heat, and the last thing you need is one more reason for it to heat. Having the sun shine on it will heat it more than you think and because it will only be heating one side of the blade, the heated side will expand and dish the saw to the point where it will not be capable of performing properly. It will not only dish the saw to one side, but chances are it will also change the tension in the saw depending on exactly how the sunlight hits it. If you have to saw with it outside for a while so that you can saw out enough lumber to build the building to house it, find a way to put up a temporary tarp or something to keep all of the sunlight away from the blade. Otherwise when you try to build the building using the lumber you sawed while the saw was heated by the sun, you will end up with a building that nobody would be proud of and having this grand

display of all of that miscut lumber isn't exactly what you want your new customers to see.

Questions about sawmills and their operation should be sent to Forum, The Northern Logger, P.O. Box 69, Old Forge, NY 13420, FAX #315-369-3736.

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