SAWMILL FORUM

CASEY CREAMER

SAW DOCTOR

Winter Sawing:

It's been a fairly cold start to the winter in the Northeast this year and as a result some of the saws out there are back to their old tricks. Let me first say that if your equipment is in good shape you should be able to saw frozen timber properly. However, just because your mill was in good enough shape to saw unfrozen timber properly, doesn't necessarily mean it is good enough to get the job done with frozen logs. Frozen logs are not impossible to saw, but they certainly do present a bit more of a challenge than the unfrozen ones.

As noted in previous installments of this column, lead is not supposed to be a fine tuner to be moved around depending on how the saw is reacting on any given day. That old wives' tale went something like if the saw is heating at the rim, that is because you have too much lead, and conversely if the saw is heating in the body that is because you don't have enough lead.

If you do have an improper amount of lead you might find that old wives tale has some significance, but *only* if you have the wrong lead to start with.

If you have 1/32" to 1/16" of lead, leave it alone and forget about it. On the other hand, if you have more lead than that, set it to the right amount and leave it there.

One caution in checking the lead:

Most people check the lead by measuring from the first headblock to a spot on the rim of the front of the saw like one particular shoulder or tooth.. Then they move the carriage so that the first headblock is at the back of the saw. They now rotate the saw so that they can measure from the head block to the same spot on the saw, except it is at the back now. The difference between those two measurements is considered to be the lead. And of course if the second measurement is larger than the first, it is positive lead while if the second measurement is smaller than the first one, you indeed have negative lead and a serious problem.

Not so fast. Yes that is the standard way of measuring the lead, but is it good enough? I say no. I prefer to repeat that same

check at each headblock. Regardless of how much lead you have, you certainly should get the exact same reading from each head block. If you get different reading you now have a big red flag that was just thrown in your face.

There are two different ways that you can get different readings. Let's say that when you did the check from the first headblock you had exactly 6" from the headblock to a marked shoulder at the front of the saw. And if you get 6 1/16" when you move the carriage to the back of the saw you think you have 1/16" lead.

When you move the carriage so that the second headblock is even with the marked tooth or shoulder at the front of the saw you see that you now have 6.5" between the headblock and the saw.

Either your headblocks are not in line with the travel of the carriage relative to the saw, or your track is not straight enough for the carriage to go past the saw in a true and proper manner. That is why I always check the lead from all of the headblocks to see if there is a good enough reason to get my alignment system out to check the travel of the carriage.

And if you are getting inconsistent lead readings, then you really don't know how much lead you have. How much is the lead and how much is the reaction of the carriage to a mis-alignment of the track? Of course there is always the

possibility that your carriage wheels are worn so much that they bottom out on the guide track and there is some lateral movement of the carriage on the track that will show up as inconsistent lead readings.

When you are troubleshooting a mill, it is important to go right down the list and check everything in a complete manner and then analyze the results. But in the heat of the battle (meaning in the middle of a production day) it is handy to just check the lead in this thorough way to help point you in the direction of other possibilities.

If you do get the same lead readings from each headblock, chances are you might not need to do a complete check of the carriage and track to figure out what your particular problem is that is preventing you from properly sawing frozen hardwoods.

Next month I will examine some other possible clues as to why you may be having some trouble with this frozen stuff. Don't despair. When saws don't run properly, there is a definite reason. All you have to do is some accurate data collection so that we can figure out what or what combination of things are throwing your saw out of whack.

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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