

SAWMILL FORUM

CASEY
CREAMER

SAW
DOCTOR

I have a 25 year-old scragg mill. I have been a sawyer for 20 years, running a circular saw and a band saw at times. I have had several discussions with the maintenance guy here about changing saws on the scragg. The question is: when one saw breaks down, do you change just the one blade (which is what I do) or change both?

That's a great question. The answer, as usual, depends on a number of variables. If I knew for sure that only one saw had a problem, I might opt for just changing that one. But I suspect that would be unlikely unless we were talking about breaking a shoulder on a saw. If the saw broke a shoulder, it would be wise to change that one and send it out for repair—unless that pair of saws has been in service for a long time, in which case this would be an excellent opportunity to change and service them both.

I should add that scragg saws tend to have a relatively small number of teeth, and many of them operate on a high speed/slow feed relationship. Fewer teeth means stronger shoulders because they are meatier. And high speed/slow feed means smaller tooth bite. The combination of those two situations means it is less likely—though not impossible—for a scragg saw to break a shoulder.

I have hammered many scragg saws and they usually show up in pairs. I can't recall ever only needing to hammer just one.

As long as you are shutting down to change one saw, you might as well change them both, as it should be close to the same amount of downtime to change one or two. The other thing to consider is that whatever happened to one saw—with the exception of shoulder breakage—usually happens to both at the same time. If you made a set while in the cut, that happened to both. If the log rolled over, that happened to both. If you feed it too fast, that is happening to both saws. And chances are if you are running one saw a bit dull, the same holds true for the other saw.

Some scragg mills have a setworks design problem—a hydraulic issue that causes them to come to an abrupt stop when moving for a set, instead of a smooth one. In this



case, if you are getting back into the cut quickly, you may find that the rim of the saws reacted to that abrupt stop and you are in the cut before the saws have had a chance to stand back up straight. This, of course, causes problems for both saws.

To avoid that problem you can get back into the cut more slowly (not all that desirable), have the saws hammered a bit stiffer, or incorporate some sort of cushioning valve into the setworks.

But getting back to your question, I prefer the idea of changing both saws at the same time and keeping your saws in sets, unless there is really strong evidence that one has a problem and the other one is fine. I wear hearing aids and one battery always dies a little before the other one. But I change them both at the same time because I really don't feel like changing batteries twice as often.

And remember to mark which side is the log side on both of your saws and have your local saw doctor mark the log side of each upon return. Forget right and left and stick with marking the log side to avoid unnecessary confusion.

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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