

# SAWMILL FORUM

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Last month we talked about lead and track alignment. Now let's look at some other possibilities behind cold weather sawing. The only difference between troubleshooting winter sawing problems and summer sawing problems is that the offending winter sawing problem can be much more subtle, and yet still create problems for you. In other words, there are things that can be out of adjustment in the summer that aren't bad enough to cause you any noticeable trouble, yet in the winter time they can become a major source of aggravation.

## Sharpening

Inaccurate sharpening is always a first on my list of possible causes of saw trouble. Grossly inaccurate sharpening will never work, no matter what the season is, but it is true that during the more forgiving summer months you are able to live with a small amount of inaccurate sharpening. Come winter time you had better watch out because that small inaccuracy that you can't even detect without your glasses on (if you are over 40) can easily be enough to start causing major sawing trouble.

## Collars

Loyal readers should be familiar with my "old tighten the nut trick" to check your collars. With the nut hand tight, you tighten it with a wrench while using a dial indicator to measure how far and in which direction the rim of the saw moves. Of course no movement at all would be the ideal goal, but as I always say, "show me something that is perfect and I will show you something you didn't measure close enough." When checking something with a standard dial indicator you will almost always be able to detect some movement. The question is how much is allowable.

Now we go back to that same winter versus summer principle. What is allowable and not causing any problems in the summer might easily be too much for winter sawing requirements. Your saw should be as flat as possible on the log side to be able to saw true lumber. The farther away from that flatness, the more trouble you will have trying to saw accurate lumber. When you tighten the nut on your collars, it will move the saw a bit. The farther it moves, the more you can expect to have trouble.

Summer or winter, we know that if the rim of the saw moves .030" towards the board side, you will not be able to make accurate lumber. We also know that .003" or .005" will probably work any time of the year. But when you get collar movement that is between .006" and .010" you are in that realm where you will probably be able to get by in the summer, but definitely not in the winter.

How about collar wobble? Remember that .005" wobble at the collar will translate to about .050" wobble on the rim of a saw that was "perfect" (not that there is such a saw) to start with. Of course since every saw has its own wobble, depending on the orientation of the wobble in the saw relative to the wobble in the collar, you could gain or lose some wobble. This is another case of the worse it is, the more sawing trouble there will be, and again, there is a lot more forgiveness for this type of inaccuracy in the summer than there is in the winter.

Let's not forget about how the saw was hammered. It's winter, so we need to be a little more careful with how flat is flat and making sure we have the right amount of tension in the proper location on the saw. And of course winter time is when you rely on the thickness of the shanks to carry the sawdust more than at any other time.

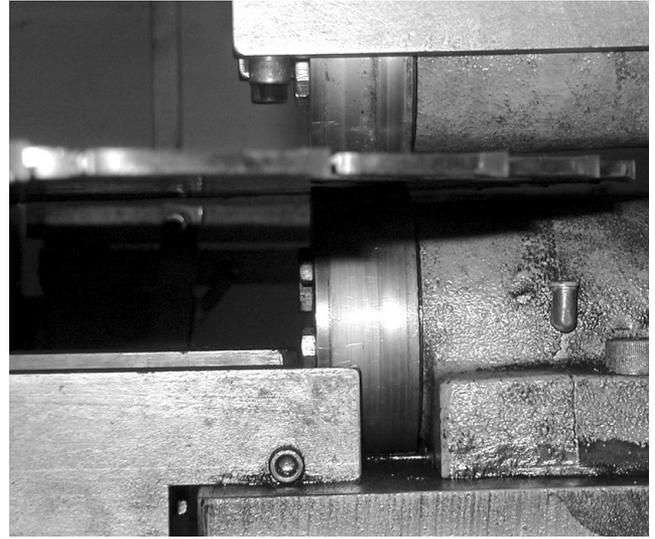
You never want to be spilling sawdust and heating the saw as a result. But in the wintertime the frozen sawdust tends to be smaller so that it is easier for it to spill out of the gullet. If the log is frozen, it is of course harder, so some sawyers have a natural tendency to try to slow down the feed a little. I understand that urge, especially if things aren't going well, but the fact is that when you are sawing frozen timber it is the most important time to keep up a proper feed rate so that the sawdust doesn't get so fine that it spills out of the gullet. And as anyone who has done any winter sawing knows, when frozen sawdust spills, it not only heats the blade, but that same friction and resultant heat tends to momentarily melt the sawdust so that it then refreezes onto the log and then forces the saw even farther off line than the heat itself was doing. Half worn out shanks are fine in the summer, but they just won't get the job done properly in the winter. Late fall is always the best time to replace your shanks so



**caption**

that you have the best equipment possible when the logs start to freeze.

The trick to wintertime sawmill troubleshooting is that you just have to scrutinize everything much more closely in the winter than you had to in the summer. It is all of the same stuff that you have to check, but in the winter you have to check it that much closer to find a problem that was most likely there in the summer, but not causing you any discern-



**caption**

able problems. Now all of a sudden it's winter and those same minor inaccuracies become a major negative influence.

**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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