

SAWMILL FORUM

CASEY
CREAMER

SAW
DOCTOR



I have an old wooden handset mill. I used to take my saws up to the same guy for 35 years to be hammered and they always seemed to run okay. He has since retired and I have taken my saws to a couple of different people and after repeated attempts I am still having trouble with them. I am wondering if I should get a new flat belt because the old one does have some vibration to it? Or maybe I have collar trouble? What do you think?

The first rule of troubleshooting sawmills—or anything else for that matter—is to ask what else changed at exactly the same time that the trouble started.

Rule Number Two is that once you find the main cause of your trouble, you should go ahead and check the rest of the mill to see what else might have been mis-adjusted in an effort to compensate for the problem.

Starting with Rule Number One, it looks pretty obvious that your problem coincided with the retirement of your favorite saw smith. It doesn't take much of a troubleshooter to figure this one out. Are you experiencing some vibration problems from the flat belt? Of course you are. But that problem didn't seem to bother you when you were getting your saws hammered by the person who has since retired.

Is your old hand set mill worn quite a bit? Of course it is—but again you have to go back to when the problem started. It started when other people tried to hammer your saws. I am sure your old mill has plenty of problems, but I am also sure that most if not all of those problems were present when your saws were being hammered correctly. Did the saws work perfectly? Of course not. Remember that I always say, “show me something that is perfect and I will show you something you haven't measured close enough.”

The point is that even with all of the problems affecting your old, worn mill, the properly hammered saws performed up to your expectations. Then you started taking your saws to some people who apparently didn't have much luck at making your saws run well enough to meet your standards.



Typical older handset circular sawmill.

Of course a saw doctor who is really putting up saws properly shouldn't need to rely on luck. When a saw is flat on the log side, with an acceptable amount of wobble, and the right amount of tension in the right location, luck no longer becomes part of the equation for a properly running saw. You should still try to fix some of the other things that are worn in your mill to adhere to Rule Number Two, but first you have to figure out where you can get your saws hammered properly.

You might try seeing if your old retired saw doctor has any recommendations for you. The saw hammering community is pretty small and most of us are at least familiar with each other's work within our own region.

The ones who are good also know who else is properly hammering saws.

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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