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Lester River 48-in. circular saw cuts many species of logs into boards and beams.



Mill Owner Started By Building His Own Saw

"I had a normal family life growing up, went to college, got a degree in mechanical engineering, and had a good job, but I guess a squirrel got in my head somewhere along the line and landed me in the sawmill business," Will Feyder says with a laugh. Now in his early 30s, Feyder owns Lester River Sawmill north of Duluth, Minn.

"My interest in lumber began when I started building a bandsaw in college at age 24. I finished it a couple of years later,

found logs online, on Craigslist, or saw them for sale around town. I cut them into usable pieces and made furniture," Feyder says. "That, along with having a portable Wood Mizer for two years, was a hobby that produced some good income, and I enjoyed the work. I graduated from college and used my mechanical engineering degree to get a good job, but I was always intrigued by lumber."

After seven years, Feyder quit his engineering job and bought Lester River Sawmill. He ran it solo for 18 mos. and says, "It was truly baptism by fire, like juggling a dozen balls at once. I had to be a mechanic to keep the equipment working, a process engineer to convert a log into money-making finished wood products, a scrap yard manager to use the waste products, a salesman to sell what I produced, and an accountant to keep track of everything."

Feyder says, "When people think of a sawmill, they think we just cut logs, but that's just the beginning. I have a lot of equipment to operate and maintain, including a 48-in. circular saw, a drying kiln, a straight-line rip saw, a planer, a molder, a wide belt sander, and yard machinery."

After 18 mos. operating the mill alone, as the previous owner had done, Feyder was able to hire an employee. "Now, I can



Feyder owns and operates Lester River Sawmill north of Duluth, Minn.

turn out a lot more products and serve more customers," he says. "From native logs, we produce tongue and groove paneling, modern shiplap, moldings, trim and surfaced four sides (SFS) lumber. We also produce dimensional lumber, timbers and ground contact tamarack, which is naturally rot-resistant and ideal for ground-level boardwalks used in Minnesota parks.

"With our location in the Northwoods, we have a large source of birch, ash, maple and tamarack," Feyder says. "I do what's called grade sawing, so I don't sort the logs. I load up the deck, and each log dictates what I'll cut out of it. The goal is to get the most high-grade boards out of each log in different widths and thicknesses. I stack the sawn boards, dry them in the kiln, then trim, straighten and mold them into finished products."

Feyder and his employee are also improving the mill by building a 24-ft. by 80-ft. addition next to his 48-in. circular saw. "The goal is to produce more volume and have space for more equipment. It's also a new space to keep sawdust dry, which we sell for animal bedding," Feyder says. "That, along with the scrap, is a valuable byproduct of the boards, timbers and trim."

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"From native logs, we produce paneling, shiplap, moldings, trim, lumber and timbers," says Feyder.

Finished design fits several bales, a mineral block and calf pellets along the bottom.



Teen Makes Homemade Hay Feeding Stations

Honey Bee Farmstead of York, Australia, makes and sells innovative animal feeders from recycled IBC totes. "We've been blown away by the response to my 15-year-old son Noah's Animal Feeder Stations," says Mel. "The video's received over 10 million views and loads of shares and saves."

The Farmstead prioritizes repurposing, so taking an item commonly discarded and giving it new life made sense. "Each feeder takes about 45 min. to make, though there are other designs we can put together faster," Mel says. "We like this feeder design because it holds two to three hay bales. That enables you to leave the farm while ensuring plenty

of food for cows, sheep, goats and other livestock."

Honey Bee Farmstead's YouTube channel provides step-by-step instructions for making one. You'll need an IBC tote, a welder, safety gear, a grinder with a cutting and sanding disc, a piece of mesh, and tools for removing screws.

Start by removing the top metal frame to free the tote's top. Be sure to save all the plumbing and cut-off pieces. "These are expensive. You might need them for future projects," says Mel.

Next, draw lines along the top and bottom of the tote aligned with the wire bands. Cut

the middle bars at the corners and just above the bottom row. Flip the tote to remove the plastic from the metal frame. Next, bend the loose panels toward the center. Nick suggests welding a flat piece of mesh at the bottom to make a broader base that can fit several bales. Otherwise, it's possible to tie the two sides into a V, though this strategy limits interior space. Cut apart the plastic tote at the line marks, then place the top and bottom onto the modified frame.

The finished design fits several bales, a mineral block and calf pellets along the bottom. "They're so much more than just a feeder," says Mel. "And the public response has been incredible. We've sold quite a few locally for \$250. Noah's saving the money for a car."

The feeder may only be the start, as Noah has more projects on the horizon. He's looking to make automatic filling water troughs using blue plastic drums, another single-use waste item.

"Anyone can make this trough, and it's a far superior way to feed your livestock," says Mel. "Not only is it cost-effective, but keeping the feed off the ground reduces parasite problems in your livestock."

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