



# Valby **MODEL 260** Wood Chipper

**With the lumber market in the doldrums and the market for fuel chips continuing to grow, the availability of sawdust and chips for bedding has taken a hit. Who would have thought years ago that sawdust and chips would ever reach their current value and demand, almost creating a situation at times where the tail is wagging the dog? But the result has been the increased application of wood chipping machines designed to produce suitable bedding out of what was once a material to be wasted.**

**T**ucked away in the remote Vermont village of East Barnard, on a sparsely traveled dirt road, there's an old farm sawmill of the style one seldom sees anymore. Arranging for a visit, I found that the mill site was easy enough to find; the old farm and mill buildings, together with years

of debris, sprawl over a good many acres. But upon arrival, a visitor is greeted by one of those interesting rural characters with whom northern New England is still blessed—the family patriarch, Floyd VanAlstyne. It doesn't take a visitor long to realize that Floyd's 90 years have not slowed him down a great deal. Although his two sons now

**The Valby wood chipper at the Mead Farm has an extension on the discharge to extend over the tall side of the truck body.**

operate the sawmill, Floyd showed that he still walks the property with an unbent posture and knows the operation.

Floyd and I sat in the expansive kitchen of the old farmhouse as he told tales of what brought him to Vermont shortly after the end of World War II. He had managed to purchase the old farm, built a milking herd of 45 cows, and although he no longer milks, he does still maintain a herd of Angus cattle. The maple syrup operation takes precedence every spring with 3,500 taps to care for. The 200 or more acres of woodland were placed in the "tree farm" program back in 1957, and Floyd believes that he has the oldest continuous tree farm in Vermont.

I had heard that he had a new Valby chipper somewhere on the premises and was curious to know where it might be located. But before we could leave the kitchen, Floyd wanted to talk at great lengths about how he had gotten into the sawmill business. His description was quite a testimony to the changing times as he told of how he had bought a used BelSaw 50 years ago but soon found that it couldn't handle the 20-inch-diameter, 16-foot-long hemlock logs he was cutting on the property. Then he found an old Lane O sawmill that had been thrown away as junk, rebuilt it, and operated it for years. With the demise of that mill 20 years ago, Floyd found a used Lane 1 mill and is still sawing as much as 300 MBF annually.

Eventually picking our way through a mill yard which displays many years of activity, we came on the wood chipper, a Valby 260. As his two sons operated the chipper, Floyd told me that he has had the machine for six years and that it has definitely been a worthwhile

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addition to the mill operation. He sells most of the chipper production, charging \$10 per cubic yard for the pine and hemlock material.

**The Valby Chipper**

The Valby wood chipper has a choice of feed chute styles, designed for different types of material. For sawmill slab wood,



**Ninety-year-old Floyd VanAlstyne shows off a handful of the bedding chips. He considers his Valby wood chipper to be a proper investment.**

**VALBY Model 260 Wood Chipper**

<b>Chipping disc</b>	boxed double disc
Diameter	41 in.
Weight	560 lbs.
<b>Knives</b>	three, 11.8 in. x 5.5 in. x 0.55 in. full-size
<b>Chip length</b>	adjustable from 1/4 in. to 1 in.
<b>Anvil</b>	adjustable hardened steel
<b>Infeed capacity</b>	Round wood 10-1/4 in. diameter Slab wood 18 in. wide (10 in. with hydraulic feed)
<b>Feed system</b>	direct from knives with hand feed 2 feed rollers with hydraulic feed
<b>Production</b>	13-15 tons/hr. or 13-52 cu. yd./hr.
<b>Power requirement</b>	40-100 hp, 540-1,000 rpm
<b>Discharge</b>	adjustable 360 degrees
<b>Standard discharge height</b>	9 ft. w/ optional extension 11-1/2 ft.
<b>Hydraulic requirements</b>	(for hydraulic feed model only) 6-15 gpm, 2,000 psi
<b>Shipping weight</b>	Hand-feed model 1,430 lbs. Hydraulic-feed model 1,585 lbs.
<b>Price</b>	Hand feed \$12,115 Hydraulic feed \$16,960

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The feed chute on the hydraulic-feed model has a smaller opening leading to the two powered feed rollers.



Out behind the wood shed at the VanAlstyne farm, the wood chipper discharges into a chip bin.

poles, or other material that does not have to be compressed as it is fed, a wide-mouth chute mounted at a low feeding point allows the operator to feed the material in a less strenuous, stand-up position. Although Floyd has had the chipper for six years, he added a hydraulic feed only a year ago. He said he considers hand-feeding a little too dangerous. With the

hydraulic feed system, the maximum slab width is restricted to 10 inches because the slabs are fed in on a straight angle to the anvil.

Power requirements for the Valby 260 vary from 40 hp to 100 hp, depending on the type and size of the material being chipped. Floyd uses an 80-hp Challenger tractor with 550 rpm's on the PTO. The chipper has a 3-point-hitch mount,

of course, but can easily stand alone on the ground, as was the case with the VanAlstyne chipper.

## Production on a New York Farm

The production of wood-chip bedding for farm use doesn't always mean that there's a sawmill on-site. The Mead family farm in Canajoharie, New York, has been operating a Valby 260 wood chipper for two years and has acquired all the sawmill slabs they need from the small mills in the area. There are a number of Amish farmers with small sawmills who would otherwise be burning their slabs.

The Mead farm has 200 milking cows plus another 200 heifers. The bedding, made mostly from white pine, is used only with the heifers. Farmers have noticed that the moisture in wood-chip bedding is apt to cause mastitis in the milking herd. The Mead family's Valby wood chipper is operated only for their own use, but Gerald Mead was kind enough to process a truckload of chips for me during my visit.

There was a portable sawmill on location, set up next to a pile of very rough-looking pine slabs. But it was a neighbor's mill that was brought in to break down some of the slabs which were much too large to fit into the feed chute of the chipper. There were also a few poor quality logs in the pile. The Valby 260 can process round wood up to 10-1/4 inches in diameter if there are no large branch stubs or bumps, and slab wood up to 18 inches wide, unless the slab has a rough shape. I noticed that the crew didn't try to feed the short chunks; they tend to wedge in the feed system. Better to set them aside for firewood. The Mead machine is hand fed rather than hydraulic fed; the hand-feed system can accommodate wider slabs than are possible with the hydraulic feed.

The 41-inch disc on the chipper

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A neighbor's portable sawmill was on hand at the Mead Farm to break down the large material.

has three full-size 11.8-inch-wide knives, and the wood is actually cut twice before being blown out from the chipper. An additional feature is an optional crusher screen to increase uniformity. The manufacturer claims that this system is what produces an exceptionally uniform chip size. The Meads had the chipper attached to the PTO of a 90-hp John Deere 420 diesel tractor.

Chip size is adjustable, varying from 1/4 inch for animal bedding up to 1 inch for landscape material. Chip size is determined by the rate of feed into the chipper. When cutting 1/4-inch bedding, the feed rate is about 1 foot per second. The feed rate for 1/2-inch chips, for example, is 3 feet per second. Production rate for the chipper, therefore, depends considerably on the type of material being produced.

The Mead operation took about 1-1/2 hours to fill the 18-foot truck body (720 cubic feet). An optional extension had to be added onto the blower discharge pipe because of the height of the truck sideboard. With clean wood they found they can cut for at least nine hours, often longer, before they need to sharpen the knives. But that is an ideal, of course, because small sawmills are not equipped with debarkers to make clean slabs.

### Safety Features

The Valby products, made in Finland, have proven to be reliable and include safety features as an important component. The knife motion on the chipper is not toward the operator, reducing the

risk of loose material flying back through the feed chute. The blower discharge height is 9-1/2 feet above eye level. A safety bar on top of the feed chute will close the opening; with the hydraulic feed, the bar will stop the infeed and even reverse the feed.

With the expanding market for different types of wood chips and bedding and the downturn in lumber production, there is an expanded need for wood chippers. The portability and capability of wood chippers such as the Valby have proven their worth. ■

*Bill Gove is retired from a forestry career with private industry and with state government as a wood utilization specialist and lives in Williamstown, Vermont. He is a regular contributor and is the author of several books on the history of railroading and logging.*



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