



With the rise in oil prices a few months ago, the firewood market demands took an upturn, motivating a few more logging operators to include some firewood production as a sideline.

Palax Firewood Processors Models KS 35 and KS 35S

With some of the sawlog markets on a downturn, firewood production is, of course, a welcome addition. But now the moderation of heating fuel prices in 2009 and a troubled economy have altered that market situation for some of the producers. Nonetheless, firewood production is still an attractive sideline. And for many producers, a rugged firewood processor remains an essential tool.

During the late winter I visited two different part-time operations using what I consider to be one of the finer firewood processors on the market, the Palax. Both of the operators were cutting firewood with either the KS 35 or the KS 35S model, one of the smaller models made by the Finnish manufacturer.

The KS 35

Allen Bouthillier, of Lancaster, New Hampshire, operates A.B. Logging Inc., a logging, excavating, and land-clearing company. Recently he has had to cut back on his 21-person workforce because of economic conditions. His type of logging enables the crews to accumulate and set aside a lot of firewood-sized material—thus, the opportunity to conduct a small, part-time firewood business. Allen kindly provided me with a short visit on a cool day last winter when there was still a lot of ice in the yard.

Allen uses a Palax KS 35 firewood processor, a model equipped with fewer hydraulic controls than are found on the KS 35S. Power is provided by a PTO attached in his setup to a 35-hp tractor. It was

obvious that the Palax firewood processor is made to operate at a comfortable working height and that the area underneath is spacious enough to facilitate easy removal of the debris which is bound to accumulate. A grate with large holes at the bottom of the splitting chute helps keep the debris separated from the split wood.

Allen had to leave, and so asked one of his employees to cut up a few logs for me. The Palax has a nice feature with the saw chain; it runs only when activated for a cut, providing quieter operation and less wear. The log stop had a practical feature; it swung to the rear before the cut was made, allowing the log to fall unobstructed into the splitting chute. Allen has found that for safety reasons they

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do not cut wood less than 10 inches in length.

Contending with the icy winter conditions, the machine operator was having a little trouble with the log feed, but that was understandable with so much ice on the logs. The circumstances were not ideal for cutting wood that day; frozen dirt on the logs was dulling the chain saw. However, Allen praised the machine's capability under normal operating conditions. "Maintenance is very easy," he stated.

Allen had purchased the processor the previous fall and over a period of six months had cut 200 cords. He cuts a lot of stove wood material and finds that the 6-way splitting wedge works well for those customers. The market during the time of my visit was bringing him \$225 per cord for green wood delivered. The Palax is easily portable while mounted on the back of a tractor, the conveyor folding over the top to make a unit 7-foot 10-inches high and about 9-foot 4-inches wide. Allen has done some custom processing, charging \$75 per cord.

The KS 35S

John Trombley of Rutland, Vermont, mixes logging with a variety of other activities to keep his crew of five and his machinery busy. Whenever possible he also provides firewood for Vermont's Wood Warms Program, which produces firewood for low-income families. John processes his firewood with a Palax model KS 35S, which he has had since October 2008. The machine has logged over 177 hours, cutting upwards of 300 cords.

The Palax KS 35S differs from the KS 35 in that there are a number of hydraulic controls included. The chain saw, the infeed conveyor, and the down pressure clamp on the log are all controlled completely by a joy-stick valve. The height position of the splitting wedge is controlled hydraulically, and the speed of the splitting cylinder is determined by the automatic high-

Palax Models KS 35 and 35S

Dimensions when folded for transport or storage:

Width.....	9 ft. 4 in.
Height.....	7 ft. 10 in.
Weight.....	1,590 lbs.
Cutting length.....	10 in. to 2 ft.
Maximum log diameter.....	13.8 in.
Infeed conveyers.....	8 in. x 7 ft. 3 in.
Chain saw.....	15 in. sidebar
Splitting wedge.....	2/4, 2/6, or 2/3 as option
Splitting cylinder.....	17,600 lbs.
Flow of hydraulic pump.....	9.5 gal./min.
Discharge conveyer.....	14 ft. 1 in. with 2 chains and lifting winch
Price	
KS 35 (w/o power unit).....	\$14,500
KS 35S.....	\$20,000
Log deck.....	\$2,000
Hydraulic deck.....	\$9,000
Options.....	live log deck with log lift, electric motor
Contact distributor for sales outlets.	
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speed valve. If the processor is equipped with the optional log-lift-deck, there are hydraulic quick-connectors provided for the hoses.

While the machine was being demonstrated, John mentioned that he likes having the splitting V-channel in a straight line with the log infeed for ease in operation, rather than offset as found in some other makes of processors. He did com-

ment, however, that he found the KS 35S model to be a little weak in hydraulic power when processing tough wood, especially when using the 6-way wedge. Since most of his market is stove wood, as opposed to furnace wood, he tries to keep the size under 14 inches.

For power John has chosen a source different from one usually found on processors. He uses a



John Trombley powers his processor with a 24-hp Wood Beaver Power Pac.



Once the block has been sawn through by the chain saw there is nothing to prevent a free fall into the cutting trough.

Wood Beaver 24-hp Power Pac, mounted on the ground next to the processor for attachment to the PTO drive. His live log-deck is also a Wood Beaver brand. John reports that his Palax machine is processing a little better than one cord per hour, burning 1/2 to 3/4 gallons of gasoline per cord of wood cut.

John's crew stated that the processor is quite easy to operate with the three levers, and that it has been maintenance free. John doesn't like the foreign fittings on the hoses, but I don't think that he seems to be bothered very much by this inconvenience.

The Palax KS 35 and 35S are not the largest firewood processors made by the manufacturer, and it is understandable that the operators found that it lugged down on the big cuts. This model apparently finds its best use when cutting a wood supply with a variety of sizes, including smaller material, and there is a diameter limit of less than 14 inches for the logs.

The Palax is a comfortable machine to operate and a pleasure to watch in action. The strong fuelwood market is with us to stay. Prepare for it. ■

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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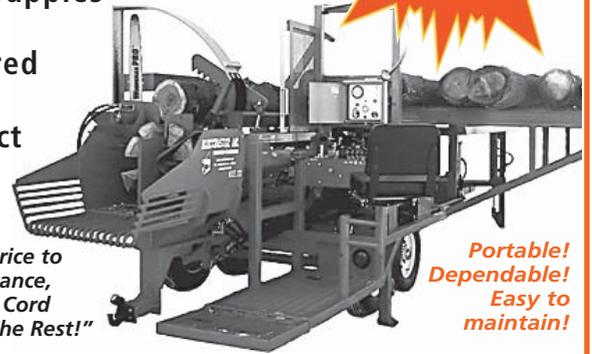
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