



With its robust 3-strand live deck, the Multitek 1620 turned this large pile of logs into firewood in short order.

MULTITEK PRO MODEL 1620 SS

On a cool October day in Lucas, Ohio, I met up with Buster Norris, owner of Norris Tree Service and Land Clearing. Nestled in the heart of Amish country, Buster is no stranger to working with wood for a living. As the owner of a tree service and a business selling outdoor wood boilers, he is constantly looking for new services to offer his customers. A little more than a year ago, he decided to expand his business to selling firewood.

Buster's criteria when shopping for a firewood processor were fairly simple. He wanted a machine that was large enough that it had a circle blade for the cutoff apparatus and ample horsepower to run it. Through his experiences in his tree service business, he was all too familiar with the rigors of using a bar and chain to cut firewood. While it is effective and does the job, he wanted something that was faster and required a lot less maintenance. "I was doing research on machines and realized that the circle blade just makes sense. You don't have to mess around sharpening the chain all the time, or buy-

ing bar oil at \$10–\$12 per gallon."

After looking at various firewood processors on the market, weighing the costs and features, and test-driving a few machines, he settled on the Multitek Pro Model 1620 SS. Beneath the roof of his cavernous firewood storage building, Buster walked me through the features of the firewood processor.

Features

Made in Prentice, Wisconsin, the 1620 features a 40-inch guillotine-style circle blade that Multitek claims is 20% faster than a bar and chain. The 3-strand live deck is capable of handling logs 20 feet in

length, and the machine can handle logs up to 16 inches in diameter. The live deck folds up so the entire machine can easily be towed down the road on its heavy-duty axle. Buster upgraded to a 47-hp Yanmar engine for the power plant, the largest option available.

The 1620SS can be operated with one person, but two are desirable. Buster explained that the ideal setup is to have one person running the firewood processor while the other is trimming up the wood with a chain saw and keeping the log deck loaded. "They rate it at 2 to 3 cords per hour. Three cords per hour is probably the per-



With sawdust flying, Buster demonstrates the speed and efficiency of the Multitek 1620 SS.

MULTITEK Pro Model 1620 SS

EQUIPMENT OVERVIEW

Weight6,400 lbs
Length/width22 ft. long,
 7 ft. 6 in. wide

Power plant or recommended tractor size and type.....44-hp Turbo Kubota or 47-hp Yanmar diesel engines

Maximum log length (1)20 ft.
Maximum log diameter16 in.

Type of cutter (circle or chain saw) (1)40 in. circle saw

Splitting cylinder diameter5 ft. 4 in.

OUTPUT

Minimum/maximum firewood length24 in.

Rate (cords per hour).....2-3 cords per hour

Cycle time5 sec.

Splitter head options.....2, 4, 6, 8

Conveyer length15 ft. or separate 20 ft., 30 ft., 35 ft.

Splitting force (tons)22 tons

OPERATION

Vertical adjustment of splitter headyes

Log advancing mechanismdrag chain with cleats
Pump type (1, 2, or 3 stage).....3 Section
Detent on piston extensionno
Detent on piston retraction.....yes
Log loader type.....none, typically use skid steer or tractors
Log deck (if there is a log deck, is it a live deck?).....yes, 3-strand log deck

SALES

Suggested price for basic package\$45,000 to \$55,000 depending on configuration

Optionsconveyers, night processing lights, 3-phase electric, wedge options, operator seat option

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fect scenario, with 14- to 16-inch-diameter wood and perfectly straight telephone poles with no knots, no nothing.”

He went on to explain the challenge of running normal firewood-grade logs through the processor. Large crooks in a log, and protruding limbs and knobs have the possibility of hanging up in the log trough and not engaging the drive chain. It would be possible to avoid this by cutting the logs into more manageable lengths instead of the full 20-foot capacity of the machine. But this means more logs to handle, and therefore more time for one person to be loading the deck instead of running the processor. It became clear that it is a fine balance of time and effort if he is working by himself.

The kerf on the 1620 SS’s 40-inch blade is robust and generates a fair amount of sawdust in one day of operation. To help keep the mess to a minimum, Buster attached a large

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hose to the exhaust port on the saw so the sawdust can be collected into large garbage cans. In a day of running, the 1620 SS will make the equivalent of nine cans' worth of sawdust. As for his decision to buy a circle blade over a chain saw cutoff bar, his decision was validated. "I did hit a nail in a log once. It chipped the corner on one tooth. The very next tooth was fine."

After trying the optional integrated conveyer that is available for the Multitek 1620 SS, Buster realized it was just not heavy enough for his continual use or the sheer volume of wood he was processing. Portability was not a huge factor, as the majority of the wood he was processing would be at his home. He replaced it with a Multitek FWC 30, a 30-foot conveyer capable of reaching the height of his building and his dump truck. The FWC 30 conveyer conveniently hooks up to the Multitek 1620 SS via hydraulic lines, so there is no need for a secondary power source. The wheels also pivot 90 degrees so it can



Extremely crooked logs can be a challenge for the log trough and should be cut down to shorter lengths.

be rolled sideways and cover the whole width of his firewood building. He has not noticed any slow-down in the 1620 SS's performance when powering the conveyer.

Fast, Smooth, and Efficient

After a few minutes of talking over the specifics on the machine, occasionally interrupted by the sound of a passing coal train, Buster turned the key and the machine's diesel engine roared to life. After a brief



The hydraulic controls are well arranged and shielded behind Plexiglass.

warm-up period for the hydraulics, Buster got to work turning logs into firewood.

I quickly noticed that he had no problem rushing through the hydraulic controls, engaging in multiple operations at once. While the splitter ram was pushing a block of firewood through the 4-way splitter head, Buster was already advancing the log for the next cut. As the splitter ram was retracting, he was clamping and cutting off the next block of firewood. "As I'm cutting, sometimes



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I've still got to wait for that thing to get back, or my next block of wood is landing on top." Rather than moving the saw blade all the way back up after each cut, he only moved it high enough to get the advancing log under it. The whole operation was fast, smooth, and efficient.

In fact, while he was cutting I only noticed a couple of things that slowed him down at the controls.

First was the retraction time on the splitter ram. Buster said he wished it would retract a little bit faster to speed up operation. The second issue was long, crooked, and knobby logs hanging up in the log trough. Buster thinks that if the sides of the log trough were not angled up so high, logs would lie down inside the trough and also engage the drive chain better.

While he has seen a few evolutions of the 1620 SS, such as hydraulic component changes, and the relocation of the operator's station, Buster is confident that his 1620 SS is a great machine. And while his firewood sales are currently behind what they were last year, he remains optimistic. "It's a little bit slower, but we had a lot hotter summer." Here is hoping Buster gets the cooler weather he desires to keep his Multitek Pro Model 1620 SS making firewood. ■



The components on the 1620 SS are composed of heavy-grade materials designed to handle even the toughest woods.

As a self-described "sawdust addict," J.R. Salzman is both an avid sawyer and woodworker. He is a longtime competitor in professional lumberjack sports, winning eight Men's Professional Log Rolling world titles, and the 2005 ESPY Award for Best Outdoor Sports Athlete. He operates his portable sawmill on a regular basis and has a BS in Technology Education.

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