

V & R SAWING

A Custom Sawmilling Business Supported by Rural Folk and Urban Contractors

There was a time when towns had at least a lumberyard, grocery store, and post office to support the surrounding community, but as people migrated into cities and farms became bigger with fewer farmers, many small-town lumberyards closed down. That's why businesses like V & R Sawing are such a benefit to smaller communities like Rosthern, Saskatchewan, and the surrounding area.

While it took some time to establish a client base, sawmill owner Vernon Heatwole has demonstrated that there is a great need for good sawmilling skills and custom wood products made on demand in rural areas. He even has city clients like building contractors who support his business because they know Heatwole can produce exactly what they need.

The backbone of the V & R Sawing business is a Carthage carriage with a Frickco Inc. circular saw headrig for processing logs into timbers and lumber. They produce between 4,000 and 6,000 board feet of wood products per day. "I always tell people that we can custom-cut anything and everything," says



Vernon Heatwole and his son Marcus manage production at V & R Sawing, a custom sawmilling business strongly supported by surrounding rural folk and building contractors from the city.

Heatwole. “There aren’t a lot of sawmills around here anymore that saw specialty materials. We do an awful lot of custom-cutting of odd-size material like timbers. We can cut up to 18-inch squares and then lumber down to as small as 1/2-inch-thick by 6-inch-wide material for siding.”

Among the custom lumber products they can manufacture are tongue-and-groove, v-joint, ship lap, lap siding, two different styles of log siding, as well as flooring products. Oddball products like these aren’t readily available from today’s retail lumber outlets. He also does a solid business in supplying timbers in a variety of custom dimensions—a good niche market for him.

First, logs are bucked to length by chain saw in the yard and then transported with a skid steer to the sawmill infeed. The sawmill consists of a 48-inch, Frickco headrig with a vertical edger. Heatwole purchased the sawmill from Alabama after he established himself in Saskatchewan.

Ohio-based Frickco Inc. was formed in 1993. After 20 years in the sawmill service-and-supply business, Jerry L. Albright, president of Frickco Inc., purchased all of the blueprints, patterns, copyrights, and patents for Frick sawmills and related equipment that had been designed and built by The Frick Company of Waynesboro, Pennsylvania, since the mid-1800s.

Heatwole says that his newer-model Frickco headrig has hydraulic log turning and air-powered dogging as well as setworks, adding that once the log is on the infeed deck, he can manipulate it through the headrig from the control room cab. He has equipped the sawmill with Simonds circular saw blades that have carbide-tipped teeth. He says that the Simonds blades deliver good performance and they are supplied to him by A M Ludwig Saw Shop in Thunder Bay, Ontario.

V & R Sawing processes logs into lumber and timber products almost exclusively from white spruce, which is abundant in Saskatchewan’s boreal forest.



Among the products manufactured at V & R Sawing are tongue-and-groove, v-joint, ship lap, lap siding, two different styles of log siding, as well as flooring products.





The backbone of the V & R Sawing business is an American-made Frickco circular saw, processing logs on a Carthage carriage.

Complementing his headrig is a Yates American, 4-sided planer moulder for producing wood products like v-joint and tongue-and-groove lumber. For transporting both logs and lumber stacks in the yard, V & R Sawing uses a Cat 246 skid steer and a Case 586G forklift.

This custom sawmilling and wood products business is highly visible, located about 45 minutes north of the city of Saskatoon.

Heatwole says that visibility has been great for attracting customers. “There are many farmers in this area, and they make up our main business, along with some industrial wood materials,” says Heatwole. “We do quite a lot of corral material in 2-inch by 6-inch dimensions in 16-foot lengths, as well as windbreak slabs.”

While the good news is that he is surrounded by farms, the bad news is that Heatwole is surrounded by farms, which means that he has to transport logs to his location. However, he says that hasn’t been a hindrance. While Rosthern itself is a farming area, it exists on the southern edge of Saskatchewan’s extensive boreal forest.

V & R Sawing has been at this location for about 15 years, and Heatwole has worked hard to establish the business. Previously, he operated a similar business in Ontario. He grew up near Kenora and his father operated a sawmill, “for as long as I can remember...and I started helping him probably when I was as young as 9 years old after I came home from school.”

Heatwole took over the family farm and sawmill in Ontario, diversifying into purchasing some logs, manufacturing wood products, and marketing them. For a time, he manufactured pallet material sold into the United States—the U.S. border is close to Kenora. Eventually, he found that farming and operating his sawmill was too difficult to manage, so he sold the farm. “I had an uncle here in Rosthern, so he invited me to come out,” says Heatwole. He did and established his family sawmilling business, with sons Marcus, Daniel, and Jeffrey working with him.

What makes the business interesting are some of the unique product requests. For example, one order required 22-inch-long tapered timbers measuring 12 inches wide at the bottom and 7 inches wide at the

V & R Sawing has gained a reputation for their ability to produce custom-sized wood products. Another lumber package is being loaded with products not readily available at your local big box store.



top. They were used as blocking for a trucking company. He also filled another order of massive 12-inch x 12-inch timbers measuring 16 feet long that were transported to a mine site way up north in Nunavut.

The company does no logging, but sources wood from loggers or purchases oversize logs from other sawmills. "Anything that grows in Saskatchewan, we can process," says Heatwole. "We've had logs as large as 39 inches in diameter. As far as length, we like them 16 feet, but we also take quite a lot of tree-length material and then cut it up." He says his sawmill can cut logs up to 24 feet in length.

While V & R Sawing can custom-cut any local species, Vernon has chosen to focus on spruce products exclusively for business reasons. In addition to custom cutting, they keep an inventory of common lumber sizes from 1 inch x 4 inches to 2 inches x 10 inches in different lengths, and popular square timber sizes. Heatwole says they fit in the inventory sawing whenever they can. Custom cutting takes up most of their time. ■



V & R Sawing serves both custom and walk-in customers by maintaining an inventory of popular lumber and timber sizes.

Tony Kryzanowski is an award-winning, Canadian-based writer with over 25 years' experience reporting on many aspects of sawmilling and woodlot management in both Canada and parts of the United States. He is passionate about small-scale sawmilling, sustainable forest management, and maintenance of forest biodiversity and ecosystems.

Just Add Wood and You're Ready To Make Money In Firewood!
BRUTE FORCE Gives You Choices
Based On Production Needs...

*Invest Less!
Produce More!*

Model 16-24
Compact Power & Portability



- 18" diameter cut
- 32 HP Kohler gas engine
- Up to 2 1/2 chords per hour

Model 18-24
Most Popular Model!



- 21" diameter cut
- 37 HP Kohler Big Block gas or diesel engine
- Up to 3 chords per hour

Model 24-30HD
For Large Logs & Big Production!



- 30" diameter cut
- 56 HP Kohler diesel engine
- Up to 5 chords per hour

Every BRUTE FORCE Processor comes FULLY LOADED and includes our exclusive Round Trough to handle crooked wood with ease!



715-678-0037

<https://www.bruteforceusa.com>
 email: bruteforcemfg@yahoo.com

- Firewood Processors
- Log Splitters
- Firewood Bundlers & Conveyors

Dealerships Available