

# New Cordless Chainsaws Put To The Test

By Jim Ruen, Contributing Editor

Battery-powered chainsaws have been catching on fast in recent years for pruning branches and cutting down small trees and brush, but they haven't been much good for big jobs. That's starting to change as several companies have recently introduced new electric saws with more power and 18 to 20-in. bars.

So FARM SHOW decided to test them out using chainsaws sent to us by Ryobi, Echo, DeWalt, and Greenworks. The tests were conducted on my farm in southern Minnesota.

Note: We didn't get one from Stihl, which is planning to introduce their new larger model this fall. And we didn't test EGO's new 18-in. saw.

## The First Trial

I had several hundred feet of 8 to 14-in. black cherry, shagbark hickory and oak logs waiting to be cut into firewood length rounds. I used each chainsaw until its battery ran down.

I saw very little difference in how they handled the load. However, the Greenworks chainsaws did seem to have more staying power.

## The Second Trial

A few days later, I turned all six chainsaws over to Joe Baumgartner and his son, Tony, who run a local tree service called B&B Tree Service. They put them to work cutting up two 14-ft. dump trailers loaded with logs and branches.

"We started out cutting 12 to 14-in. material, and they all did well," says Baumgartner. "As they slipped into the half bars (battery strength), we needed to move out of the big stuff, but they still held strong in 5 to 6-in. dia. wood."

He had tried smaller cordless chainsaws when they came out 3 or 4 years ago. "There was a day-and-night difference between them and these," he says. "These have more power and feel more solid."

He really liked the Ryobi and Echo 18-in. chainsaws. They were slightly lighter in weight and enough smaller to be easier to handle in tight spots. He also appreciated the chainsaw tool holder integrated into each power head's body.

"I felt they and the DeWalt were very well balanced," he says "The Greenworks chainsaws were really good performers, but noticeably heavier. If going with a saw that heavy, why not go with gas and get the performance?"

Overall, Baumgartner said he felt the saws are not yet ready for professionals but he said all six would be great for rural residents and farmers.

"I think any of them could cut up a pickup load of wood on a single charge of the battery," he says. "They'd be great to throw into your pickup or ATV to check fences after a storm. And they're big enough to handle almost any tree that might fall."

## The Third Trial

I invited a few area chainsaw users to give the rigs a try. They attacked a large pile of brush that contained everything from oak and elm to boxelder, which I had cleared out of an old fence line.

Erick Abnet is a neighboring farmer who burns wood to heat his home and pastures cattle on a wooded hillside. Clearing trees and brush from fence lines is part of the job. He had a different take from Baumgartner on the Greenworks saws' weight.

"I felt the Greenworks chainsaws had more to them, not just in weight, but also in power," he says. "They felt and worked more like I expect a full-size chainsaw to work."

One concern Abnet and others raised about the Ryobi was the battery placement. While the other chainsaws loaded the battery from the top, Ryobi's slides in on the underside.

"I would worry about hitting hard objects with it or setting it down in mud or snow," says Abnet.

In conclusion, Abnet says, "Going into this, I wondered what a cordless saw could

do. I was impressed with how they cut overall."

Doug Goede is a retired farmer who works part-time at a local golf course. He agreed with Abnet about the feel of the Greenworks chainsaws. But he also appreciated the lighter weight and nimbleness of the Echo and Ryobi units.

"I liked the Echo for its slim shape," he says. "It felt good to handle."

Overall, Goede was impressed with how well the saws performed and was also appreciative of their low noise levels. "I can't wait to put one to use at the golf course on some dead pines. The golfers will love how quiet a cordless chainsaw runs."

Chainsaw collector Chris O'Hara also liked the feel of the Greenworks 18 and 20-in. chainsaws. He compared them to his collection of older 2-cylinder chainsaws.

"The Greenworks saws feel like regular gas-powered chainsaws," he says. "They didn't bog down. I could cut in deep with the tip or the back of the saw, and they cut the same. They have good power and just kept going."

O'Hara also liked the safety switch on the side of the Greenworks trigger grip. It's convenient to the trigger. The Echo has a similar safety. By contrast, the Ryobi has a safety ahead of the trigger grip. It requires a change of position every time the motor stops.

O'Hara was also impressed with the Echo. "It had good power and cut through everything up to and including bigger stuff," he says.

"I think of chainsaws as heavy-duty work tools," concludes O'Hara. "I was very skeptical of cordless chainsaws but I was surprised how well they all cut."

## Conclusion

All six chainsaws were more than acceptable to the users. Since performance was relatively close (aside from the cookie test shown at right), preferences came down to weight, feel and a few features, like the chainsaw tool holder.

There were also some annoyances. For example, on the Ryobi and the Greenworks 20-in. chainsaw, you can adjust chainsaw oil flow - a nice feature. However, the Ryobi tended to leak oil even with the flow control turned all the way down.

Also, all the saws have steel bucking spikes, except for the Ryobi. It has a plastic bumper.

The DeWalts have a knurled plastic sleeve over the chain tensioner, making it easy to finger tighten the chain before replacing the sprocket cover face plate. However, the tensioner sleeve appeared to strip if over tightened. I was able to readjust the chain with the faceplate removed. This would get really annoying if I owned this saw.

Like the other users, I was pleased with how far cordless chainsaws have come. They're much quieter and it's nice not to have to mess with the compression release, choke and pull-rope, not to mention the oil/gas mix, every time I have a tree to cut down or some logs to cut up. When a big wind comes through, a cordless 18 or 20-in. chainsaw will make a trip through the woodlot or around the fence line a lot easier.

However, I won't be giving up my 62cc

## The Saws

Echo 56V FDC S-5000 (18-in.)

Ryobi 40V RY40S08 (18-i.)

DeWalt 60V DCCS672 (18-in.)

DeWalt 60V DCCS677 (20-in.)

Greenworks 82V 82CS27 (18-in.)

Greenworks 82V 82CS34 (20-in.)

## Pricing

Prices were not shared with the trial participants beforehand. The Ryobi and the Echo came in at the low end at \$299, including a 5.0Ah battery and charger. The 18-in. DeWalt is priced at \$369 with a charger and a 2.0Ah battery. The 20-in. DeWalt is available with a 5.0Ah battery and charger for \$449. The 18-in. Greenworks is priced at \$549.99 with a 4.0Ah battery and dual port charger. The 20-in. Greenworks is priced at \$599 for the tool, battery and charger. (It will be on the market this fall.)



Chris O'Hara, Erick Abnet and Doug Goede put the six battery-powered chainsaws through their paces on a variety of hardwoods.



Doug Goede attacked a pile of trees and brush with Ryobi's 18-in. cordless saw.



Ryobi and Echo saws both have handy chainsaw tool holder slots.



## The Cookie Test

Jim Ruen strapped a 12-in. hickory log to his loader bucket and lined up the saws to cut cookies from the log and timed how long it took each saw to make the cut.

The results were surprising. Both DeWalts came in around 16 seconds; the 18-in. Greenworks and the Ryobi in 25 seconds; and the Echo and 20-in. Greenworks came in at 32 seconds. "Unfortunately, cutting a few cookies does not illustrate battery strength. Unless all the batteries were the same size and all cuts were from the same size and species of wood, speed alone becomes suspect as a gauge of performance. That's why you should always be suspicious of product claims," says Ruen.