

Heavy-Duty Clamping Horses

JawHorse
Rockwell
 866/514-7625
 rockwelltools.com
 Street price: \$180

by Andy Engel

Regular *Tool Kit* readers might remember that I raved in the November issue about the virtues of lightweight tools. I'm taking a different tack now. On my bathroom scale, a single JawHorse weighs 45 pounds. But in this case, the weight's a good thing — sawhorses with heft don't move around, particularly when supporting heavy deck materials. Plus, each JawHorse is rated for a 300-pound load.

Another factor that contributes to the JawHorse's stability is the three-legged design, which is great for the uneven ground deck builders tend to work on (Figure 1). It would be even better if one of those legs were adjustable — for leveling the horse — but that's nit picking.

You might think that at 45 pounds each, the horses would be a chore to move, but they're not. Folded up, the single leg

acts as a carry handle (Figure 2); be a little careful here — the knob that clamps the leg in position has to be tightened firmly, or the leg could slip and the horse open up in midcarry. On smooth surfaces, you can swing that leg out of the carry-handle position and use it to pull the JawHorse along on its integral roller. Folded up, the horses stand on end, storing in a very small footprint.

Still, there are lighter, less expensive folding sawhorses on the market that do a great job supporting heavy loads. What sets JawHorses apart is their clamping ability. A foot pedal located between the two front legs tightens a deep, padded pair of jaws (Figure 3). Holding stock firmly is key in making the cuts that count.

The jaws move easily and clamp with up to 1 ton of force, according to Rockwell. That clamping ability combined with the weight of the JawHorse is great for initially steady-ing posts on footings while you're preparing to brace them plumb. The JawHorse would halve the manpower normally required for this two-person job. The jaw is reversible, which provides a clamping depth of 37 inches (Figure 4).

Several optional accessories add to the Jaw Horse's utility. An extra \$50 buys an extended jaw that clamps boards up to 52 inches in width. Work with logs or big timbers? \$40 buys a set of serrated jaws said to handle logs up to 12 inches in diameter.

Perhaps more useful to most deck builders is the \$80 miter-saw station (Figure 5). While not as well-suited to the job as a true dedicated saw



Figure 1. The JawHorses' stable tripod configuration and stout clamping mechanism securely support heavy deck materials.



Figure 2. Folded up, the rear leg serves as a handle for toting the 45-pound JawHorses.

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Figure 3. A foot pedal tightens the jaws, and the yellow tab at the front of the JawHorse locks the tightened jaws in place.

stand, this rig sure adds to the utility of the JawHorses. The table where the saw would sit, along with a 2x4 of any length you choose, clamps into one JawHorse. Adjustable-height outfeed rollers clamp to the 2x4. If you're handling heavy material, you should support the ends of the 2x4 with a couple of legs made from, you guessed it, 2x4. Included clamps make this attachment.

The only bad news is the \$180 price (each). Nonetheless, deck builders who grit their teeth and spend the money will be glad they did — especially if they work alone — every time they use the tool.

Andy Engel is the editor of Professional Deck Builder.



Figure 4. The jaw is easily reversed, increasing the stock clamping width to 37 inches.



Figure 5. An optional miter-saw station works with an owner-supplied 2x4, which allows the outfeed rollers to be positioned wherever they'll work best.

Lightweight Miter Saw With Muscle

7¹/₂-inch LS0714
Makita USA
800/462-5482
makita.com
Street price: \$435



by Jim Kidd

When I first saw one of the Makita mini slide compound miter saws on a job site, I thought it looked like a play-school version of a grown-up's saw. It was a tiny thing and I couldn't imagine wanting to use it in place of my 12-inch slide compound miter saw. You know the old saying, though: Good things come in small packages.

This little saw has an 11³/₄-inch cross-cut capa-

city and will miter a 2x8 at 45 degrees. While a 4-by will choke this little guy, not much else can.

For cutting decking and railings, this is a great saw. It weighs in at just under 28 pounds. At the end of a long, fast-paced day in the sun, I'm a lot happier lifting this little diamond into my truck than I am lugging my 12-inch saw.

Jim Kidd is a remodeler and deck builder from Ghent, N.Y. ❖