Bell introduces new Waratah head

Bell Equipment's forestry customers in the KwaZulu-Natal region, including Swaziland and Nelspruit, were introduced to the company's latest product offerings, the new Waratah 270E Mark II Harvesting Head fitted to a Bell HX230 Hydraulic Excavator, at a customer field day last September.

About 25 customers braved wet and muddy conditions to attend the field day, which took place in the Sappi Clan forests north-east of Albert Falls Dam. Bell Equipment Marketing Manager: Sugar and Forestry, Tim Beningfield said the day provided an ideal opportunity to obtain customer feedback and judge market response to the new head and carrier.

He explains the reason for introducing a new head: "The Waratah 270E offers a more cost effective harvesting solution. The head has evolved over 10 years in South American eucalyptus, which has similar characteristics to South African eucalyptus. South American forests lend themselves to the 270E because of the uniformity and straight trees and that's why it's the preferred head in that region. With Waratah's technology and quality, coupled with the cost advantage, we are confident that it will be as successful in our South African forests."

Adds Bell Equipment's General Manager Sales: Forestry and Sugar, Derek Howe: "Our demonstration unit is number 1 039 of the Waratah 270 model and is a Mark 2 version, which was released 18 months ago with the latest technology and showing improved debarking quality with new roller design to limit fibre damage."

The 270E is a departure from Waratah's 616 Harvesting Head with the main differences between the products being the number of rollers, knife configuration and measuring systems. The 270E is a two roller head where the knives cradle the tree as the rollers push it along compared to the 616, which has three rollers to hold the tree up and the knives have a purely delimbing function.



The 616 offers precision measuring suited for saw log type timber operations where the 270E measuring system is less precise and more ideally suited to pulp wood, providing a more cost effective solution.

Meanwhile, the Bell 230E Excavator carrier is the first of Bell Equipment's new Excavators to be modified for the forestry industry following the company's distribution agreement signed with Liebherr last year. Customer input and dedicated professional engineering resources were used to marry the head to the carrier and "forestryfy" the carrier by fitting a cage around the cab to protect the operator, integrating a Bell ADT-proven cooling package into the hydraulic system, re-routing hydraulic hoses for increased protection, fitting bumper rails around the base of the carrier and installing additional track guides.

"Lighting has also been substantially improved by fitting seven LED lights, each providing 4 500 lumens. Not only does this lighting package give out more light but they also have a life expectancy three times that of the xenon equivalent," said Bell Equipment Engineer, Ian Kramer.

Howe adds: "Of course, at the end of the day, choosing a particular product is also determined by back up and support. We are proud to say that with a massive recent training drive that our forestry customers now receive dedicated and specialised support from our Bell Customer Service Centres located within forestry





areas. At the same time Bell Equipment enjoys ongoing support from John Deere, which supplies a large portion of our forestry range. Even though the two companies have announced that they will supply different articulated dump trucks to their markets, the relationship remains mutually beneficial in all other aspects, including our distribution agreement regarding John Deere Forestry equipment."

The demonstration unit is currently working in the Zululand region to collect comprehensive productivity data of both the Excavator and 270E Harvesting Head in different applications. The 270E has already been tested successfully in eucalyptus of up to 0,4m³/tree as the outer limitation. Bell is now eager to measure its performance in small pulpwood of 0,1m³/tree and less to assess the unit's capabilities in small trees.