

Bell Cane Loaders deliver faster loading cycles

Faster loading cycles on a sugar-cane loading zone is working well for a large sugar estate on the KwaZulu-Natal South Coast resulting in sustained and quicker supply to Illovo's Sezela mill, some 20 km away.

Ellingham Estate is owned by members of the well-known Crookes family (not to be confused with Crookes Brothers Limited), and has made its mark as a leading supplier of cane for just over a hundred years. The Ellingham Estate farm management team consists of General Manager, Andre Greeff and Farm Managers, Ronald Cole and Rudi Wortmann, assisted by Assistant Farm Managers, Kiki Ilunga and Xolani Dlamini. The mechanical maintenance of the vehicle fleet is Workshop Manager, Brett Cole's responsibility. Working together, the Estate continues to produce approximately 125 000 tonnes of quality cane.

"The Crookes family and this Estate have for a very long time relied on Bell Cane Loaders to load their product, both in-field as well as on the loading zones. The bulk of the loading is done with the bigger machines on the zones for faster load times," Ronald Cole says. "We're aware of an early model Bell Cane Loader with its round-tube frame dating back to 1970, as well as three Funkey

Bell Cane Loaders that were used on the various farms from around 1977."

Since 2009, Ellingham Estate has been replacing its fleet of Bell Cane Loaders with new models. A Bell 125A four-cylinder machine was first bought, followed by two Bell 220A models. The Estate's Bell Cane Loader fleet now totals four, with a Bell 120A three-cylinder adding to the fleet. The three-cylinder and four-cylinder machines are used in-field. The Bell 125A four-cylinder Cane Loader has double front wheels for improved traction.

The Estate also purchased a pre-owned Bell 700J Dozer for use in land-preparation and ripping and this machine is proving its worth, with its hydrostatically driven tracks a clear advantage.

"As our production areas are mostly very hilly, our smaller Bell 120A Cane Loaders are used in-field where they perform well with very little ground impact, even on wet slopes," Ronald adds. "It is however, on the loading zones where we can clearly see the advantage of using the heavier Bell 220A Cane Loaders with their bigger grabs, higher operational speed and ability to load our haulage fleet to their maximum capacity, quickly and efficiently."



Daniel van Huyssteen (Bell Equipment Sales Representative), Brett Cole (Ellingham Estate Workshop Manager), Ronald Cole (Ellingham Estate Farm Manager) and Mark Caruth (Bell Equipment Product Support Representative) with Ellingham Estate's Bell 700J Dozer.

Production and loading at Ellingham Estate continues 24-hours a day, six and a half days a week, ensuring that the nearby Sezela mill is adequately supplied.

"We specified a bigger 140-litre fuel tank on our new Bell 220A Cane Loaders as this is an advantage when the pressure is on to get our cut cane to the mill," Brett Cole says. "Using bigger 18,4 x 30 rims also gives us a height and weight advantage and we find that even with trash cane, we can still load a 32-tonne rig in around 30 minutes due to the fact that the Bell 220A Cane Loader can compact the cane in the trailer."

"Using these bigger Bell 220A Cane Loaders on our loading zones, has shaved a clear 15 minutes per rig off our normal loading times and this ensures us at least 22 loads leave for the mill each day," the Managers agree.

Bell Equipment's Three-Wheeler technology has proved itself to be a winner in the long-term, translating into high mechanical availabilities and the Bell Cane Loaders at Ellingham Estate are no different. Even under extreme pressure to get the road rigs loaded and on the road, the fuel consumption of around 5,9 litres per hour on the Bell 220A Cane Loaders don't dent the bottom line.

"As we are firm believers that machine life can be maximised by strict daily checks and preventative maintenance, our machines are serviced every 250 hours," Brett says. "During the warranty periods, Bell Equipment does all the servicing and then we take over once the warranties have run out."

Ronald Cole emphasizes that the speed, agility and operational weight of the Bell 220A Cane Loader holds clear advantages for any sugar estate. "These machines are very efficient and reliable and it is difficult to imagine how we would run our operation without them", he says.

