

# L-series TLB establishes itself as an invaluable tool for Kroondal farmer

**Good rains after a prolonged drought gladden any farmer's heart but having a new model versatile machine to add value to existing infrastructure and create more tillable land, must rank up there as well.**

This is what Rudolf Ottermann discovered recently on his family farm, aptly called Wolfshöhle, near Kroondal, which lies just south-east of Rustenburg in the North West Province. Rudolf heads up the fifth generation of Ottermanns on this land and he cultivates mainly tobacco, wheat, sunflowers, chillies and soya beans to go with the cattle he breeds for beef.

"We had used an agricultural tractor that had been fitted with a front bucket for many years, and this machine recently needed to be replaced," Rudolf explains. "A friend of ours, Victor Lange, who hails from this area and incidentally works for Bell Equipment as a mechanic, recommended the new Bell 315SL 4x4 Tractor Loader Backhoe (TLB) as a versatile machine, ideal for our needs, and we are so happy that we heeded his advice."

The Ottermann Farm took delivery of its new Bell 315SL 4x4 TLB in late January 2017 and the machine was put to work immediately loading a variety of products such as coal for the tobacco drying kilns and chicken manure for fertilizer. The rear boomed bucket has proved invaluable for removing trees in areas where new fertile land was being prepared for the planting of crops after good rains.

The machine has also seen service creating and maintaining drainage and irrigation trenches, laying pipes and backfilling ditches. Culverts are suddenly maintained with ease and the farm's roads are benefitting from a tailor-made tool for the task.

"Although our two operators for this machine are relatively experienced, Bell Equipment, from their Customer Service Centre in Rustenburg, went to great lengths to ensure that they fully understood the controls, operation and daily preventative maintenance that a sophisticated machine like this demands," Rudolf adds.



*Bell Equipment Sales Representative Anton Snyman (left) talks to Rudolf Ottermann while the new Bell 315SL 4x4 TLB clears a field in the background.*

What is clearly noticeable on the new model Bell 315SL 4x4 TLB is the ergonomically enhanced cab with its wide expanse of tinted glass which provides a virtually unobstructed view of the work at hand and surrounding job site.

In the cab, a sealed-switch module gives fingertip control of keyless start, optional ride control, autoshift and auxiliary hydraulics – plus many other functions. A machine-security system with touchpad passcode helps prevent unauthorised operation. An advanced monitor provides a wealth of vital and general operating information with onboard diagnostics of most sensors and switches for quick trouble-shooting and maximum uptime.

On the steering column is a control for the exterior lights, wipers, and turn signals, which are now more conveniently located on the multifunction lever, just like on a regular vehicle and helping operators keep their eye on the job at hand.

A new 'palm-on-top' loader control grip is much more comfortable and easy to use. Control of the clutch disconnect, transmission quick-shift, auxiliary proportional roller and momentary mechanical-front-wheel drive is at the operator's fingertips. The new Bell 315SL TLB is also fitted with cruise control where a rotary throttle allows the operator to dial in the required speed.

With fuel being such an important factor in operating costs, an automatic shutdown feature turns off the engine after an operator-selected period of inactivity. "We're no strangers to running a substantial fleet of plant as we already operate 14 John Deere agricultural tractors and associated implements," Rudolf says. "We are therefore sensitive to the routine of daily maintenance and we are very pleased at how this is done on the new Bell 315SL TLB."

Daily checks are made easy with same-side ground level service points. Simple to read sight-gauges and easy to access grease nipples increase uptime. The cooling pack has been redesigned to allow the coolers to tilt away from the radiator for convenient core clean-out. The same applies for the air-conditioner condenser which is hinged, making it more accessible for cleaning.

Large pins and replaceable bushings ensure long-term durability and help keep the backhoe and loader tight and digging true.

"We have not had our Bell 315SL TLB long enough to give you accurate fuel burn figures, but I can tell you that it seems economical enough considering that we've run it almost non-stop since receiving it and refilling the tank does not take much," Rudolf says. "Bell Equipment will do the machine's servicing during the warranty period and we're considering entering into a service agreement with the company, so ensuring the machine's longevity as I'm positive that this machine is going to see us relying on it to maintain our entire farm."

