

Bell Loggers keep W.P. Chipper chipping

A young man's love for fruit trees and the machinery used in maintaining orchards, has seen him capture a niche market in the fruit growing areas of South Africa's Western Cape.

Willem van der Merwe grew up in the Koue Bokkeveld, some 50km north of Ceres in the Western Cape. This is an area described by a well-known manufacturer of fruit juice as "the perfect place to grow juice".

It is also the area where Willem learnt to appreciate the fruits of labour in agriculture, which a later qualification from the Elsenburg Agricultural College reinforced. A six-year stint farming wheat as a farm manager in the Swartland followed but Willem's heart lay in the fruit orchards which dot the Western Cape landscape.

"I grew up with fruit trees and the machinery that is used in orchards so when a tree-felling business came up for sale in Worcester, in October 2004, I bought it," he tells us. "We started using wood-chippers to clear the sites where we had felled trees and soon demand grew for the

wood-chippers, so much so that we bought five of these machines to hire out."

And so the company W.P. Woodchipper Hire & Sales cc was born. Willem and his teams find that 50% of their clients are in the fruit-growing industry and a further 20% of demand comes from a variety of farmers wanting windrows removed. They also work for local municipalities such as Worcester, Wellington, Paarl, Stellenbosch, Robertson and Montague. Bush clearing and waste-wood removal for agriculture is undertaken, at times as far as 150km away.

"We decided quite early on that mechanisation was the way to go and to this end, we bought two used Bell 225A Loggers, one after the other back in 2007, to assist us when we had to move tree stumps that had been uprooted using excavators," he says. "Both these machines are still running, providing valuable time-saving service, feeding felled timber into our wood-chippers on a wide variety of sites."

"Our fleet of Bell Loggers has now grown to number eight and we're more than happy with their performance, considering that our first five were bought on the used market," he adds. "Using between 5 to 7 litres of diesel an hour works for us and their mechanical availability is high."

Typically, an orchard of fruit trees would be cleared once the trees are no longer producing fruit of the correct quality and quantity. Two Bell 225A Loggers would be matched with a Bandit 2680 Wood-chipper with the Bell machines used to pull the trees out of the ground, roots and all. The felled trees are then systematically fed into the wood-chipper which grinds them up to produce mulch which is in much demand.

"We sell our mulch to farmers and nurserymen who spread it on and around young trees to retain moisture, control weeds and create a better microclimate for the trees to grow in," Willem explains. "We're proud to say that ours is a zero carbon footprint industry."

He is adamant though that the hard work of moving the felled trees is done by their Bell 225A Loggers, lifting and feeding them into the wood-chipper which is mostly left in one position. "We have taken a firm decision since our cash-flow is steady, that we will now only buy new Bell 225A Loggers and run them for five years or 8 000 hours," Willem says. "We bought our last three Bell Loggers new and their purchase was made possible with financing from Bell Finance."

"I can honestly say that our Bell 225A Loggers are the real workhorses in our operation and with their high mechanical availability and subsequent excellent work rate, keep our wood-chippers making mulch."



With high mechanical availability and good fuel economy, the Bell 225A Loggers deliver an excellent work rate to keep W.P. Chipper's wood-chippers producing mulch.



Bell Equipment Sales Representative, Fiona Johnson with Anfra (5) and Willem van der Merwe standing infield while the Bell 225A Loggers feed the wood-chipper.



Whether it's removing windrows, or old fruit orchards, W.P. Chipper has a winning fleet of Bell 22A Loggers and wood-chippers to serve farmers in the Western Cape. The Bell Loggers are real workhorses responsible for moving felled trees and feeding them into the wood-chipper.