

Bell 225F Logger sustains sawmill production for Rance Timber

Traditionally Bell Loggers have been known as quite simple yet robust machines, which is probably why they have become the industry standard as a loading and timber handling tool. But, as robust as they are, they can also display the odd quirk as the workshop and transport manager of a leading South African timber group will attest to.

CJ Rance (Pty) Ltd, trading as Rance Timber, is a sawmilling company manufacturing premium quality South African pine-sawn board products that has been in operation since 1910.

Rance Timber has grown from humble beginnings as a one-man business in the earliest pioneering days of the timber industry in South Africa, to a successful, modern enterprise employing 1 400 people over both the forestry and sawmilling divisions. It has been the backbone of the timber industry in the Amathole

region of the Eastern Cape and continues to play a vital role in the socio-economic development of the rural economy and its people.

Its log resource is supplied mainly from the 15 000 hectares of plantations owned and managed by its sister company, Amathole Forestry Company. These plantations are managed on a sustained yield basis according to best international and environmental practices.

The company operates two sawmills, namely Kubusi Sawmill and Sandile Sawmill, and is committed to providing industry-leading service and quality for its valued customers.

It's at the Sandile Sawmill that we chat to Devan Sternberg, Rance Timber's Workshop and Transport Manager and a man with the responsibility of looking after a vast fleet of timber and forestry-related vehicles and machines comprising utility vehicles, Bell Loggers, transport trucks, wheel loaders, and skidders.

"Rance Timber (Pty) Ltd is a timber company in the true sense of the word with its own forests and two sawmills and it therefore owns the whole value chain in producing saw timber that has a wide variety of uses and markets," Devan says. "Here at the Sandile Sawmill, we process pine logs from 13cm to 23cm in diameter and create timber products that are sold throughout the South African market.

These products include structural, industrial, and packaging timber."

Getting the timber from the forestry compartments to roadside depots, onto trucks, and then onto stockpiles at the sawmills presents its own challenges and for a very long time Rance Timber has made use of Bell Loggers in the 220A Teleboom and 225A Crankboom ranges. The company's fleet of Bell A-series Loggers numbers 30 machines.

"We run eight Bell Loggers on infield operations, another five loading transport trucks, and the balance at the two sawmills," Devan says. "Our oldest Bell Logger dates to the 1980s and was completely refurbished five years ago."



A further four machines were subsequently refurbished by Bell Equipment in East London fairly recently.

"In that way, we extract further lives from these rugged machines and can do that if the machines' frames are intact. When refurbishing them, we generally fit a new engine, new wheel motors and replace the hydraulic pump under the seat as well as re-bushing the grab."

Refurbishing or rebuilding will typically happen at around 10 000 hours with second and even third lives extending a Bell Logger's life to 30 000 hours and in some cases 40 000 hours, which constitutes a wonderful return on the initial investment."

In 2021, Rance Timber took the decision to buy a new Bell Logger specifically for use at the Sandile Sawmill where unloading of timber off trucks, sorting on the log deck, and feeding into the mill only occurs during daylight.

"We had consulted with Anthony Enslin, Bell Equipment's Sales Representative in East London, and took delivery of a new Bell 225F Logger in July 2021, the first such machine in the Bell F-series," Devan adds.

"It made an immediate difference to our production at the Sandile Sawmill as there is now a sustained feed to the mill off the log deck.

"Having had only A-series Loggers before, we were impressed with how much quieter the new F-series Logger runs with its Yanmar engine and the fuel consumption is much better."

Rance Timber's new Bell 225F Logger has been bought with a standard warranty and has by now exited the warranty period with around 2 000 hours on its hour meter. Despite this and the fact that Devan manages a fully stocked workshop and substantial parts holding, Rance Timber still insists that mechanics from Bell Equipment in East London do the major milestone servicing at the 1 000-hour marks.

"What makes our relationship with Bell Equipment special is that Denton Webber and his team in East London may be almost 100km away, but should we make that phone call, they drop everything to attend to our needs and always have," Devan says. "That level of service sells subsequent machines and breeds brand loyalty."



Rance Timber Workshop and Transport Manager, Devan Sternberg.

Unitrans Mining chooses Bell Equipment as machinery supplier

Unitrans Mining, a leading player in the mining industry, has selected Bell Equipment as one of their machinery suppliers for their latest contract. The decision was driven by the unparalleled availability and unwavering support offered by Bell Equipment, setting them apart from their competitors.



Kobus Burger, Operations Executive: Unitrans Mining, emphasised the long-standing relationship the company has cultivated with Bell Equipment over the years. "As a group, we have always relied on Bell Equipment for many of our mining, haulage, material handling, and agricultural machinery requirements," Kobus states. "This enduring partnership has been built upon the foundation of trust and reliability that Bell Equipment consistently delivers to Unitrans."

When the time came to fulfil the requirements of their new contract for a leading South African cement manufacturer, Unitrans Mining again turned to Bell Equipment without hesitation. Their specific needs called for 30-ton Articulated Dump Trucks (ADTs) complemented by 50-ton Excavators. Bell Equipment's

machinery perfectly matched Unitrans Mining's criteria, including competitive pricing, availability, and life cycle costings.

In the past, says Kobus, it was common to pair the right loading tool with a suitable haulage vehicle when establishing a fleet of yellow equipment for an opencast mining operation. "However, today, the process has become more analytical. Various factors, such as life cycle costings, have gained significance in determining the fleet's efficiency, return on investment, and long-term viability."

The Unitrans Group specialises in supplying logistics and handling services in petrochemicals, industrial and freight solutions, mining, and bulk material