

# Standardising on JCB Backhoes makes sense to Campbell Scott

**Like a Karoo sheep farmer likes to keep his breeding herd young and vibrant, so does an owner of a plant hire company in that same area prefer to keep his fleet of backhoe loaders well-maintained and in peak condition and for that, he has a few tricks up his sleeve.**

Campbell Scott grew up on his parents' farm in Underberg in the foothills of the KwaZulu-Natal Drakensberg. The Scott family farmed cattle and sheep and planted maize. After school, the energetic and ambitious Campbell first qualified as a diesel mechanic before setting off on a 12-year-long stint doing the rounds amongst the many sugarcane and

vegetable farmers of the lower Midlands, fixing their tractors, implements and vehicles from a mobile workshop.

"During this time as a roving mechanic I bought my first backhoe loader, albeit a well-used machine, but soon had it working well with some repair and good care," Campbell says. "In 2007 I had the opportunity to buy a small farm just to the south of Graaff-Reinet in the Karoo and used this machine to fix the roads and infrastructure on the farm."

What started as an idea in Campbell's mind soon grew to fruition as he bought more used backhoe loaders that had been repossessed by financial institutions after finding that there was a demand for a reliable plant hire service from especially the farmers in and around Graaff-Reinet.

"I found that mobile machines like backhoe loaders work best in this area because when different work sites aren't too far apart the machine can simply be driven there and onwards," he says. "I had realised though that as pressure from clients built to have reliable machines that didn't break down, I'd have to start buying new machines, and did so in 2014 when I bought the first new JCB 3CX Backhoe Loader."

Campbell tells us that this machine gave him 12 000 hours of profitable service and when he sold it late in 2022, he still got a fair price for it as it had been well-maintained.

"I'd given this a lot of thought and decided that the key elements in ensuring that machines don't break down while clients are paying hourly rates are sound general and preventative maintenance and that my operators buy into caring for the machines they operate. These elements add to the machines' longevity and a subsequent sound return on investment," he adds.

Most of Campbell's Backhoe Loader operators started their working lives doing manual labour on farms and through diligent training and skills transfer, he has seen them grow into responsible machine operators who fully appreciate the need to take care of that piece of yellow metal that feeds them.

"I started off buying the operators motor scooters so that they could get to the work sites on time, and this has grown to them now all owning their own 4x4 utility vehicles, which we help them to buy and pay off."

Campbell had standardised his Backhoe Loader fleet to run on machines made by JCB and his fleet of seven contains five JCB 3CX and two JCB 3DX machines. His business plan is simple and for this he believes he needs simple but durable equipment, which is what he has found in JCB Backhoe Loaders with good resale values.

"We do a few things differently and the first is that each operator has his own machine that comes with its own set of marked diesel drums, and the refuelling is recorded along with daily prestart check sheets. Then each machine carries a spare rear and front tyre on a rim and along with that go essential consumables such as hydraulic hoses in a bag, a grease gun, and replacement filters. We simply cannot afford downtime with our client base and therefore our operators are trained to fix minor things like replacing hydraulic hoses."



Campbell has also achieved superior uptime and longevity by bucking the trend of recommended services at 500-hour intervals and then some. Due to the dusty Karoo conditions and harsh terrain where his equipment is often deployed, he services his JCB Backhoe Loaders on 250 hours and then does a double flush of the engine oil and drivetrain to ensure that impurities are properly flushed out of the engine and drivetrain.

His JCB Backhoe Loaders see a wide variety of uses on farms where they are used to build and repair roads, and drainage ditches, do excavations for culverts, repair dams, and dig irrigation trenches. Local schools hire the machines to level platforms for sports fields and planned facilities, and local construction companies have requested hydraulic hammers to be fitted on the backhoe boom for demolition duties.

"I can honestly say that JCB Backhoe Loaders are durable machines. Proof of this is the one used machine we still operate, a JCB 3CX 4x2 machine we bought from a construction company in Johannesburg, which despite its 18 000 hours of

service, I'm confident enough to send anywhere in the country," he says smiling. "As mentioned before, our machines bear the brunt of hot, dry and dusty conditions with hard rock that tests buckets, pins, and bushes, and our JCB Backhoe Loaders come through just fine as our operators have the experience of knowing not to punish the machines.

"I'd like to emphasise one last important point about why we get such good life and service from our JCB Backhoe Loaders, and that is that we only use genuine JCB branded replacement parts. Years ago, we tried the shortcuts and so-called bargains that pirate parts and building of new pins and bushes offered, but that just does not work. Buying genuine parts is the way to go."

Since Bell Equipment became the official distributors of JCB equipment in South Africa, Campbell Scott has enjoyed the service his company has received from the Bell Equipment branch in Port Elizabeth and at the time of our visit, was speaking to Sales Representative, Tom Swartz, about buying another new JCB 3DX Backhoe Loader.



**Tom Swartz, Bell Sales Representative (left) with Campbell Scott, Owner of Campbell Scott Machine Hire.**

# JCB Rollers and Backhoes impress ALS Equipment Hire

**In Potchefstroom, the historic town in the North West Province founded by the Voortrekkers and known for its university, there are many businesses offering plant hire. One such company stands out from the others as it is known to be a solutions-driven company because of the experience its owners have in mining, bulk earthworks, road construction and a host of other disciplines.**



That company is aptly named ALS Equipment Hire and is a sister company of the larger ALS Plant Hire that specialises in contract mining of a variety of commodities such as gold, platinum, chrome and especially coal. ALS Equipment Hire is in the capable hands of Johan Janse van Rensburg, the Managing Director, and Malan le Roux, the Group Operations Manager.

"We don't believe we're boasting when we confidently say that here in our area, we're a solutions-driven plant hire company," Johan Janse van Rensburg says. "A farmer may call us and tell us about a problem with a dam silting, up as an example, and we, with our broader experience, can offer a viable solution to that problem.

"Most plant hire companies have Backhoe Loaders of one make or the other but very few have the experience to effectively use that and other equipment that will provide a lasting solution to a problem a client may have."

ALS Equipment Hire has a policy to replace equipment at approximately 7 000 hours. Some older machines are at times moved to the group's award-winning farming operations where production demands aren't that critical while others are traded in on new models. In September 2022, two backhoe loaders and two rollers that had reached these respective limits were sold out of hand with full service histories.

When deciding on replacement backhoe loaders and rollers, ALS Equipment Hire researched the market thoroughly but, in the end, relied on the experience of Bell Equipment Sales Representative, Kobus van Niekerk, with whom they have built a solid business relationship stretching over many years.

"Kobus, who with his extensive product knowledge we've come to trust, told us all about Bell Equipment now being the South African distributor for the market leading JCB Backhoe Loader and Roller ranges. Although we've never owned any equipment from the JCB stable, we were happy to buy some machines as