



on tour: The new Volvo buncher

By Jim Stirling

Some forestry equipment manufacturers see opportunity during an economic recession while others choose to adopt a lower profile.

Volvo is in the vanguard of the former category, as clearly indicated by its recent introduction to North America of three new models of heavy duty tracked feller bunchers/harvesters.

The middle size machine--the Volvo FB2800C--was put through its paces for interested logging companies and contractors in the B.C. Interior early in 2009. The field demonstrations were held on sites near Prince George, Quesnel and Vernon.

“The machine received a pretty favourable response,” reports Roger Dobie. “Most of the comments were about the feller buncher’s power, stability and response.” Dobie is sales manager for B.C. with Great West Equipment, the Volvo dealer, and he’s based in Vernon. The Volvo FB2800C is also available as a harvester with long reach boom and arm and dedicated harvester hydraulics.

The FB2800C feller buncher, weighing around 28 tonnes, has the size and versatility to be effective in a range of timber types and terrains, notes Dobie. And that’s a required element if a forest machine is to be productive in the B.C. Interior. It should be noted that this machine also has siblings--the zero tail swing Volvo FBR2800C, and its big brother, the Volvo FB3800C.

For the field demonstrations, the buncher was equipped with a Gilbert 3024 cutting head coupled with a Loewen high rotation wrist. “They looked like they were well suited and would be a good match with the feller buncher,” explains Dobie. And that turned out to be the case during the three field demonstrations.

One of the key benefits of the FB2800C from Dobie’s perspective is that the machine is purpose-built by Volvo and contains Volvo components. These include the Volvo diesel engine which generates a gross 324 hp and a high walker forestry undercarriage. The engine also incorporates new in-house technology making it compliant with recent regulations governing machine exhausts. “Volvo has managed to do this without adding any extra moving parts,” says Dobie.

“I think some of the FB2800C’s other key features include the machine’s 100,000 lbs of draw bar pull and its superior swing torque and lift capacity. And it has the fuel efficiency of a Volvo,” he adds. The heavy duty forestry boom and arm has dual cylinders and is designed to specifically accommodate the lifting and twisting forces generated through the tree harvesting procedure.

The FB2800C machine series also comes with what Volvo calls its Forestry Care Cab. “It provides the operator with good visibility and comfortable working conditions,” points out Dobie. The range of ergonomic design features incorporated into the cab include filtration systems to ensure the inside air remains fresh and contaminant-free. These features are important when an operator is likely to spend 10 hours or more of each working day in the cab. And when the operator gets out for regular maintenance chores, Dobie says the process is facilitated and made safer by the opening of the ma-



chine's back housing to allow easy access to the machine's main service points. Although only one side opens up on the FB2800C, there is unobstructed access to all service parts.

The FB2800C comes with the additional advantage of a reduced tail swing. This allows the buncher to operate efficiently in tight areas and next to standing timber without damaging it, explains Dobie.

The feature also brings advantages when the machine works in partial cutting or thinning applications. However, adds Dobie, the reduced tail swing fails to negatively influence the buncher's stability, and there's a solid reason for that.

"The track frame is longer and wider (than other machines of comparable size), and its larger footprint provides superior stability under real working conditions," points out Dobie. The true advantage of that is demonstrated in the bush as the machine approaches each stem and falls and positions the wood. The FB2800C has a dedicated hydraulic pump for operations of the buncher's saw head.

One other important advantage the new FB2800C feller buncher carries with it each time it goes out to work, is the back-up service and support system provided by the people at B.C. Volvo dealer Great West Equipment, Strongco Equipment, the Volvo dealer for points east of B.C., and, of course, Volvo itself.