

# BOLSTERING BUSINESS

Story: Cory Martin



## Much more than just a logging truck, Renalls' new unit with removable ExTe stanchions proves it's a multi-purpose winner.

**I**T TAKES A COLLABORATIVE EFFORT from many minds to come up with a multi-purpose unit that so perfectly fits the New Zealand environment.

Versatility is a key element to consider when building equipment for a New Zealand working landscape. Truckbody and trailer systems are no different, with multi-purpose units becoming more and more popular for trucking operations across the county.

Generally, operations such as Renalls, a logging operation based in Masterton, in the heart of the Wairarapa, require multiple units: flat decks, loggers, or tippers, one for each type of job. Having recently expanded into the transport and processing of pulpwood and bin wood, company owner Herb Renall wanted a one-size-fits-all solution for his business that was versatile

enough to efficiently cart loads of varying types and sizes.

Herb approached Kraft Engineering in Rotorua and asked if it was able to build him a unit suited the needs of his operation. The guys at Kraft got to work: "We came up with the concept of doing a flat deck self-loader with lightweight drop-in stanchions and no bunks," says Kraft Engineering Manager Todd Picken. "The reasoning is they load and unload themselves from the top so there was no need for a bunk for clearance."

Upon completion, the unit was operational but not quite perfect: the drop-in pocket that Kraft designed required a lot of refinement to get the system working well. In the end, Kraft approached Forest Centre Australia for advice, having seen them around at various truck shows in Australia.

"It was clear we weren't going to find



**Above:** Renalls' Keith Bennet says the ExTe quick-lock system turns a lengthy job into one that takes only seconds.

**Below:** Used as a logging truck or flat deck, the Kraft units have been ideal for their purpose, self-contained and versatile. Removing each stanchion takes just a few seconds.



anything locally," says Todd, "so we asked Forest Centre whether they had seen any systems similar to what we were trying to make."

Following their discussion, Reymund Kell from Forest Centre offered a solution. With the New Zealand forestry industry operating in a similar environment to some operations in Scandinavia, Reymund saw a great opening to introduce the Swedish ExTe QL system of quick locking drop-in bolsters to the NZ market.

"Rey showed us this Swedish self-locking wedge and pocket... it was really high-end stuff, it was all self-locking and you simply stepped on a small tool to remove the stanchion," says Todd.

He added the benefits were clear: "The bolsters were a bit heavier than they initially wanted but the unique way that they are locked in reduces vibration and wear. It's spring loaded, so you just drop it in and it locks into place."

So Kraft retrofitted the Renalls unit with the ExTe system, and was then commissioned to build a second unit. "The second one we just improved on a lot of things," says Todd. "We learned a hell of a lot from the first one."

The newer unit currently operates in the

Wairarapa and Greater Wellington regions carting logs, bin wood, pulp wood, export wood, and sawn timber, whilst being able to remove the bolsters and aid in the forestry operations carrying forestry equipment, containers and fuel tanks on the flat deck.

The finished product has worked perfectly for the types of wood the company carries and the environments they work in. As Herb puts it: "with the type of work we do, we need the bolsters at about 700mm centres because a lot of the wood is very short... and using the self-contained crane, the trailer can be put back onto the truck deck and go back into the forest.

"We're bringing in stuff from all around the Wairarapa area into our woodchip plant in Masterton. We had an older unit doing the bin wood before, but it was just to get us going - we needed a more complete solution," he says.

It's not only Herb that is pleased with how the unit is going; its driver loves his new gear.

Renalls driver Keith Bennett sums it up perfectly: "I've been trucking for over 25 years... there are lots of different units out there, but they can't do each other's job.

**Above:** Renalls' multi-purpose trailer unit easily stacks itself when Keith needs to head back into the forest.

**Below:** Releasing the bolsters takes just a few seconds with the foot-operated tool.



This unit can do what they do plus more. We're not just one truck, we're every truck."

Besides the obvious time-saving and versatility brought about by the unit, it makes work safer and easier for the driver. At 29kg each, the stakes are light enough for one man to carry and do not require a great deal of strain to remove. For extended use as a flat deck, the stakes can also be removed from the truck entirely rather than stowed on the vehicle.

"Going from a flat-deck to a multi bolster unit is quick, efficient, and works well for us every day," says Keith. 