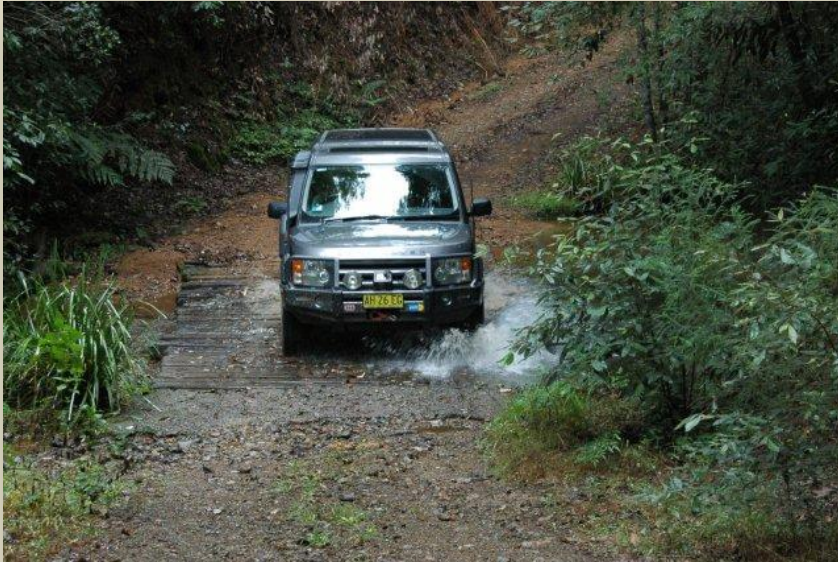


TYRES and WHEELS

BRIDGESTONE DUELER D694 LT

Bridgestone's latest Dueler passes the OTA test. We've been running Bridgestone Dueler D694s on our Land Rover Discovery 3 for the past year and we're delighted with their performance and durability.



The test 'boots' are Dueler 694s, in 255/65R17 size, with a diameter of 764mm that's almost identical to the original Land Rover fitments of 235/70R17 (for Disco 3s ex-factory on 17-inch wheels) and the 255/60R18 tyre that's standard with 18-inchers.

Where the 694Ds differ from all previous tyres we've evaluated on our Disco 3 is that they're light truck (LT) rated and have a load index of 114.

Another possible fitment would have been the same tyre in 265/65R17 size, with a load index of 116, but it's 12mm larger in diameter and that makes fitting snow chains a bit tight.

As soon as the Bridgestone's were fitted we noticed a big difference in tyre shape. Because the LT carcass is stiffer than passenger-car-rated standard or replacement rubber the sidewalls didn't bulge as much at the same pressures. Also, the casing pressure limit is 65psi should we need to use that level, but they looked good under a full load at 40-45psi.

The test tyres have done 25,000+ kilometres of mixed town and bush driving without a puncture and there's very little evidence of stone chipping and cutting.

The standard rubber fitted to most 4WDs is a problem when you drive fully laden on dirt roads, because you need to drop pressures to allow more carcass flex over stony surfaces, but passenger-car-rated tyres bulge excessively at lower than maximum allowable pressure and that makes the sidewalls vulnerable to stone cutting. The D694 LT sidewalls don't look vulnerable at dirt road pressures around 35-40psi, even with a full load in the Disco.

The test tyres have done 25,000+ kilometres of mixed town and bush driving without a puncture and there's very little evidence of stone chipping and cutting. We've been testing different types of tyre pressure monitoring systems with these tyres, so pressures are always well maintained.

The move to Dueler D694 255/65R17s has been a great success, giving us better load capacity, increased puncture resistance and an economy boost.

We've never put much store in aggressive tyre patterns, unless we're using a set for total off-road use at low speeds and reduced pressures. At normal off-road pressures the A/T pattern used on the D694s offers very good grip and has none of the on-road compromises of an M/T tyre.

On road handling and braking has been very good, even in very dusty and wet conditions. Bridgestone's used to become less grippy when the treads wore down a third, but the D694s haven't changed their characteristics.

We expected the LT tyres to be a tad harsher in ride quality and possibly noisier than the passenger-car-rated tyres we've been using, but there has been no noticeable difference.



A bonus has been improved fuel consumption. In exactly the same duty cycle we averaged 10.7L/100km using 265/60R18 passenger-car-rated tyres that we couldn't inflate beyond 45psi.

These tyres always bulged when loaded and swapping brands made no difference.

The LT casing has been the answer, because on highway stretches we've been able to use 50psi in the loaded rears and 45psi in the fronts. Our fuel consumption has dropped to a consistent 10.2L/100km, thanks mainly to higher pressures that have lowered rolling resistance and their slightly narrower 255 section.

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More information about Bridgestone Tyres at www.bridgestone.com.au