

James de Havilland takes a closer look
at the intricacies of current machinery

The anatomy of...

Heavy duty utility vehicles



Choose wisely to make most of your investment

Utility vehicles come in a wide range of shapes and sizes, with a choice of petrol, diesel and electric power. The key to choosing the right tool is establishing what it will be used for

With their low centre of gravity, a utility such as the John Deere Pro Gator and HD SelectSpray make a stable spraying combination. Are you buying a self-propelled sprayer that can do something more or a utility on its own?



Utility vehicle choice, in its broadest sense, is arguably wider now than it has ever been. It is only when you start to put together a few basic requirements, however, that the choice on offer starts to be easier to work through.

As an example, the Cushman Turf-Truckster, from Ransomes Jacobsen; the Pro Gator, from John Deere, and the Workman HDX models, from Toro, typically offer the capacity to carry attachments that can include core collectors, top dressers and sprayers. It is no surprise that these are the default heavy-duty models chosen by many golf clubs.

The key models are pretty close on their rated capacities too. Take the diesel-powered line-up that comprises the 24hp Pro Gator 2030A rated at 1,182kg, the 26.5hp Workman HDX-D-4WD offering a 1,289kg payload and the 23hp Cushman Turf Truckster offering a 1,293kg capacity. In the real world their overall specifications are broadly similar, with mechani-

cal transmissions and a choice of hydraulic packages to suit specific attachments.

Where the Gator-Truckster-Workman models come into their own is when they are fitted with purpose-designed attachments. This essentially enables end users to specify an 'off-the-peg' vehicle to cover spraying and top dressing, core collecting and other requirements, these attachments typically selling for less than trailed alternatives.

So although the 'on paper' price of these heavy-duty utilities can be high, their ability to work with purpose built attachments can actually make them a more 'complete' package. Example? Take a sprayer. All the listed models will take a sprayer of around 750 litres, with boom widths of around 6 to 7m dependant upon model.

The sprayer will sit low on the machine, to improve stability, with the weight more evenly spread between the wheels than perhaps would be the case with a trailed unit. The same will apply to a top



ABOVE LEFT: If your requirements will include the need to move personnel and materials over demanding terrain, a UTV with more serious off-road abilities comes into play. The entry level Polaris Ranger 400 has a battery-powered sibling, the Ranger E.

ABOVE RIGHT: Kubota RTV900 vehicles feature hydrostatic drive and power steering. This type of tool makes an ideal general workhorse, particularly when equipped with a hydraulic tipping body.

dresser. When these attachments are not in use, they demount easily and free the vehicle for other work.

As to alternatives to these established players, there are not really any diesel powered machines that are a match; petrol powered heavy-duty alternatives are offered by the 'big three' but a lower retail price has to be offset against the high cost and inconvenience of petrol power in most European markets.

If you are prepared to go a bit 'left field' you can find machines that perhaps could do a similar job. As an example, the Caron range from BSG Supplies includes the two-seat 847. This has a 38hp diesel engine and a 16Fx8R transmission and a payload of 3,000kg. It can be fitted with a top dresser or sprayer and comes with a three-way tipping body and cab.

BSG Caron machines do not fit into the expected utility vehicle niche, so it is all too easy to neglect them. But they are well worth a considering if you need a tool with greater capacity.

Similarly, if you are looking for a more general-purpose utility vehicle that will largely be used to move people and light kit around, consider entry-level petrol models to include the Kawasaki Mule 610



Top dressing is one of those tasks where the spreading equipment can benefit from a low load height. This allows the unit to be filled by hand from a trailer if necessary. A utility vehicle, such as a Turf Truckster, provides the right platform for this type of duty.



BSG Supplies offer the Caron range of utility vehicles in both single and dual seat variants. If you want a vehicle with a three-way tipping body, adaptable load platform and capacities of 3 tonnes plus, a Caron is worth a look.

and Polaris Ranger 400. Although petrol power is falling out of fashion due to fuelling costs, the relatively low initial purchase price of these machines can make them a cost effective buy.

There are also diesel powered models to consider to include the evergreen Kawasaki Diesel Mule, together with alternatives from companies to include Club Car, Bobcat, Kubota, JCB and well, the list is actually pretty long. The key is to establish the key difference between basic utility units designed to have a light footprint and modest load capacity and machines that have a bigger payload and the ability to power attachments.

Often overlooked are battery powered electric vehicles. These tend to go in and out of fashion, but there is no denying these tools do have a future. Polaris, for example, is selling increasingly large numbers of its Ranger E, this model essentially sharing same chassis as its Ranger 400 sibling with the result of it delivering good performance in more extreme going.

But there are other electric models to consider. These include vehicles that can be specified in road legal form. As an example, ePower Trucks has a range of electric utilities that have a 1,000kg payload. If your needs are for a runabout that may need to travel on the on road, then these machines could be of interest. In terms of cost, a road ready electric truck will cost similar money to a heavy-duty 'turf truck'.

A key to selecting a utility vehicle is to work out what it has to do. Existing heavy-duty models actually fit the bill perfectly when used as 'self-propelled' sprayers and top dressers.

But if you want a general carrier then you could do well to consider something else. The key to making the right choice is to have an open mind.



Light and relatively inexpensive to buy and run, small utilities like the petrol powered Kawasaki Mule 610 are also extremely quiet. This can be a useful feature when working around a busy course.

Existing heavy-duty models actually fit the bill perfectly when used as 'self-propelled' sprayers and top dressers



Current Toro Workman vehicles include the HDX. Looked at in isolation, these and other models from competitors do have a premium price tag. It is when you cost in attachments, however, that they start to make sense.