

Six UTV models compared:

Fancy a bit on the side?

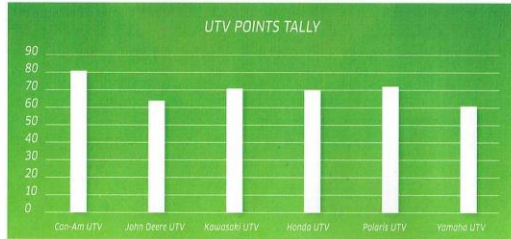
With their light footprint, seating for one or more passengers and a usefully large load bay, side-by-side utility vehicles have found a growing place on UK and Irish farms, around 4,500 units selling to professional operators every year. Here we look at six UTVs to give you an appetiser to the tasty choices on offer



We had struggled to bring together exactly like-for-like ATVs in our group test last month, and we have done an even poorer job this time with these six UTVs. On price alone, the least expensive model starts at just under £9,000, the most costly topping in excess of £20,000, albeit with a full cab, powerful heater and screen demister. Although this may not help too much when trying to compare like-for-like models within a broadly similar price bracket, our aim here is to illustrate the broad range of UTV models on offer. Take a look at alternatives marketed by the same manufacturer, such as Kawasaki, and you will note that it has Mule models that start at an ATV-rivalling price of just over £6,000 for a 401cc petrol-engine Mule SX through to pretty much double that for a two-seater Mule Pro DX diesel.

Why no Kubota?

Kubota was keen to take part in this appraisal, but it transpired that the RTV X900 we originally lined up is 'likely' to be replaced in mid-2019, with all existing UK RTV X900 stock now allocated to customers – little point, then, in looking at a machine that might no longer be on the options list as a new purchase. There are other models in the Kubota UTV line-up, but none of them were available in time for this test. We will bring you a 'drive' of the equivalent to the RTV X900 when one is made available.



We realise you cannot compare apples with oranges. The above listing merely shows how the UTVs on test scored in a number of disciplines that also included price but excluded how much fuel they used or what it would be like to work them in cold, wet and windy weather. Read the text before drawing any conclusions.

This leads to the question of petrol versus diesel. It's clear where diesel has advantages, to include fuelling costs and convenience, but, for many, going for an oil burner isn't always the best option. Petrol UTV sales remain strong for reasons that run to a broad choice of models and more affordable entry prices.

So how did we appraise and rate the UTV models looked at here? Pretty much in the same way as we did for the ATVs last month, putting the vehicles to work as part of a daily farm routine together with an intensive period with a 10-strong test team. As with the ATVs, we did not have access to muddy terrain, but we had some stiff slopes and tough ploughed ground in the mix to give them all a thorough workout.

The test score graph is based on the average of points rating comfort, manoeuvrability,

engine braking, stability, noise level, steering weight, service access, ergonomics, mud guarding, towing and overall appeal. This is for the UTVs as tested and is to be treated with the same degree of caution as suggested for the similar graph for the ATVs.

You need to read the individual machine reviews before assuming the model with the highest score is the 'best'. There is no out and out winner or loser. We suggest you try a few models before making up your mind, talk to supplying dealers and ask existing users what they think.

Thanks: A large number of people helped with both this and the ATV group test to include: the key suppliers; location hosts Anthony and Pauline Whitmill; dealers Ace ATV and Equip, Bromsgrove; P A Turney, Middleton Stoney; and Nomark Equip, Tenbury Wells.

Outline specifications – manufacturer's data

Model	Engine type	Power	Fuel capacity	Seating for ...	Load bed max capacity	Load bed dimensions LxWxH	Towing capacity	Vehicle dimensions LxWxH	Ground clearance	Price from/as tested (exVAT)
Can-Am Traxter DPS HD8	Petrol, V-twin, 800	50hp	40 litres	Three	454kg	965x1,384 x300mm	1,134kg	3,050x1,575 x1,930mm	280mm	£10,249 / £10,583
John Deere Gator XUV 965M	Diesel, Three-cylinder, 854	23hp	42 litres	Three	454kg	1,143x1,320 x304mm	907kg	3,228x1,618 x1,981mm	284mm	£15,965/ £21,258
Honda Pioneer 700-2	Petrol, Single-cylinder, 675	36hp	30 litres	Two	380kg	933x1,152 x292mm	680kg	2,910x1,525 x1,970mm	270mm	£11,500/ £11,500
Kawasaki Mule Pro DXT	Diesel, Three-cylinder, 993	24hp	30 litres	Four	453kg	1,089x1,363 x279mm	907kg	3,385x1,625 x1,970mm	265mm	£12,079*/ £15,123
Polaris Ranger 570 EPS EU	Petrol, Single-cylinder, 567	40hp	34 litres	Two	226kg	810x1,070 x290mm	600kg	2,790x1,470 x1,850mm	254mm	£8,123 / £8,834
Yamaha Viking	Petrol, Single-cylinder, 686	47hp	30 litres	Three	272kg	770x1,099 x264mm	680kg	3,100x1,570 x1,882mm	280mm	£13,249 / £16,046

*Price for 2-seat Mule Pro DX.

Can-Am Traxter DPS HD8

Powered by a nominal 800cc V-twin petrol engine developing 50hp, the Traxter HD8 has the sort of get up and go that made it a popular drive with the profi test team. Delivering a compliant ride, seating for three and easy access from either side, the Traxter slotted so well into a working routine that its abilities were almost taken for granted.

There is ample stowage within the cab, to include a removable dash-mounted toolbox and fold-up passenger seat to provide extra floor room in the cab for a dog, lamb or a few sacks of feed. A flap between the load bed and rear of the cab prevents material falling between the two. Sliding across the three seats to get in from 'the wrong side' was eased by the central seat being set back. We got the impression that Can-Am's design team actually spent a bit of time using its UTVs.

The rear load bay is rated at having a capacity of 454kg, with small indentations in the

sides allowing various attachments and dividers to slot in place, with provision for side extensions. That said, the indentations created dirt traps when loading the bed with muck or loose materials. Now take a look at this UTV's rated towing capacity. This comes in at a substantial 1,134kg, significantly greater than any other UTV in this line-up.

Supplied with an optional half-cab to include a front and rear screen plus a roof, the Traxter can be kitted out with removable doors and a heater. Having run a full soft-cab Traxter when it carried the short-lived Defender name, we suggest most will find the partial protection offered by roof and screens fine in all but the toughest of weather. The door nets that come as standard, incidentally, can be left folded out of the way.

For a variety of reasons, we could not carry out accurate fuel consumption tests, but we

would suggest running costs for a sympathetically operated Traxter HD8 will be broadly in line with an ATV of similar power. The HD8 rewards a leisured driving approach with low engine noise, decent comfort and the ability to traverse steep ground with a couple of passengers on board and a modest load in the rear bay without calling for all-out effort from the engine.

Entry-level HD8 T pricing starts at £10,249, with the DPS power-steered model as supplied starting at £10,583. You will need to raid the options list for a roof and screens; as tested, the Traxter weighed in at just under £12,086. An alternative is to consider the entry-level 38hp single-cylinder Traxter HD5 T, this having a starting price of £8,583. As it shares the same core specs as the more powerful HD8 models, it is worth a look – and even more so if really steep terrain and towing are not part of your working regime.



Can-Am Traxter UTV models share essentially the same chassis across HD5, HD8 and HD10 models, these developing 38hp, 50hp and 72hp from their petrol Rotax power units. Respective entry-level prices are £8,583, £10,249 and £14,499.



There are some clever details in the three-seat Traxter cab to include fold-up passenger seats for extra stowage and a 2.5kg capacity removable tool box in place of a conventional glovebox. Door nets comply with North American safety regs but are useful on the passenger side if you want to carry and retain a load placed in the passenger area.

If you want to hold the Traxter on a slope, such as stopping to open a gate, you need to pop the transmission into park. Some would have preferred a traditional parking brake, others suggesting the Can-Am approach prevents the operator leaving the vehicle in 'drive' with no one in the driver's seat.



Shared with the company's ATVs, the digital dash will show the transmission position, if four-wheel drive and differential locks are selected, operating hours, odometer and fuel level. Easy to read, it also allows a simple switch between kph and mph.



Fitted with a receiver drawbar, the Traxter HD8 can tow up to 1,134kg, a substantial amount that will make full use of the available 50hp. The brakes stop the Traxter well, but there is limited engine braking.



Dry weather meant our usual test route was pretty free of deep mud, but we still worked in some mucky areas, with decent guarding preventing what there was finding its way into the engine bay. Service access is good and well thought out.



The load bay has a rated capacity of 454kg, tipping on a gas strut for service/maintenance access. Made from tough mouldings, the sides have indentations to allow the easy fitting of dividers, but these do trap loose material and muck. Note the flap that helps seal the load bay gap behind the optional rear cab glazing.

John Deere Gator XUV 865M

Jump from a petrol-powered UTV and then drive off in the 23hp diesel Gator and you initially think you have left the foot-operated parking brake applied. Leisurely is a polite way of describing this UTV's get up and go. There is a choice between 50 and 60kph versions, but, to be honest, we struggled to beat 30mph during our time with the Gator so feel this is an academic choice, too.

Let the Gator's pace determine your buying decision, however, and you will miss out on a complete driving package that delivers far more than you'd expect from the initial lack of get up and go. Fitted with a full cab that deserves the name, the Deere is comfortable in more ways than just delivering a decent ride. You can hold a reasonable conversation with

your passenger without having to shout, and if it gets a bit warm the large doors have proper wind-down windows. When it is a bit nippy outside, the test vehicle's heater warmed the cab nicely, the blower directing a blast to the screen to clear it a few minutes after starting the engine from cold. Add a generous 42-litre tank feeding the seemingly frugal three-pot diesel, and Deere's Gator has all the key ingredients to make it a great farm buy. It is a proper little 'pick-up'.

Demerits? There is no engine braking to speak of, despite a rated towing capacity of 907kg. The foot-operated parking brake on our test Gator was reluctant to hold on a steep slope, and you only have the option of two seats. John Deere build is decent, and we suspect

residual values will help take the sting out of the high list price in the longer term. In base form, the Gator XUV 865M retails for £15,957, the fully equipped model on test coming in at a rather chunky £21,450. If you want a bit more pep from this latest generation of Gator, you can opt for the petrol-engine 835M alternative. This produces a handy 54hp but carries a weighty starting price of £16,269. Our test ratings may not have placed the 865M at the top of the pile, but five out of 10 said it would be a Gator they would choose if they wanted a cab. As you see an increasing number of Gator UTVs on farms these days, it suggests many users would agree, John Deere seeming to have little difficulty in finding buyers with pockets deep enough to invest in a green and yellow machine.



A key feature of the Gator XUV 865M is the option of a large and roomy cab that clearly has been designed to properly integrate with the UTV. LED headlights and power steering come as standard.



The Gator cab sets a high bar for others to follow, low noise levels enabling easy conversation with a passenger. Heating and ventilation package is hidden in the dash in automotive fashion.



Door pockets, wind-down windows and easy access are other cab attributes.



Simple display shows all you need, the speedo taking time to hit double digits, let alone top speed.



Foot-operated parking brake proved both a fiddle to apply and not overly effective on our test Gator.



Electro-hydraulic tip for the rear 454kg capacity load bed is an option but one you will really appreciate when discharging a load such as muck or logs. Note top rails on bed sides.



Service access is decent, the lifting 'bannet' revealing a void that could easily be exploited for storage.

Honda Pioneer 700-2



For those who don't see the need for a roof and screen on a UTV, we suggest they take a Pioneer for a blast on a frosty morning or in the rain. As on other UTV models, the side nets and side bars on the roll frame get in the way.



No differential ensures full-time drive to both rear wheels, so we expected manoeuvrability to suffer. In two-wheel drive, the Pioneer proved perfectly agile. Over-centre tailgate clamps are fine, but the alternative single-centre release systems are quicker and easier to use.



Front bench for two is reasonably comfortable, with a flat floor for good legroom.



Honda gets the main controls spot on for ease of operation, the dash-mounted parking brake proving a hit when stopping to open and close gates. There are only three speeds in the transmission, but we had no problem scaling steep ground. Engine braking is fine if you approach a steep slope slowly and let the UTV trickle down with no throttle.



Honda ATV users will feel right at home, the digital dash looking much as it does on the company's quads and providing basic info.



Internal door latches have awkward access, making jumping in and out of the vehicle to open gates more of a faff than it needs to be.



A lack of shielding allows muck to build up around the drive shafts and transmission. Brackets on the chassis suggest this is a problem that can be easily resolved.

Powered by a single-cylinder 36hp 675cc liquid-cooled petrol engine and driving through a three-speed auto, essentially similar in design to the company's Rincon TRX680FA, it is no surprise that the Honda Pioneer is easily compared to an ATV. It has sparkling performance, great engine braking, is a doddle to place in difficult terrain and it scales and descends steep ground with ease. If you are a dedicated Honda ATV user looking to switch to a UTV, this model will no doubt be on your short list. But hold on. Honda supplied the test Pioneer in entry-level two-seat form without screens or roof. Fitted with small doors, the Pioneer has the potential to protect both operator and passenger from mud, muck and moisture but a UTV without a screen and roof is not much fun in the cold and wet. Even in mild September weather the test team commented on how draughty the Pioneer was and that none would enjoy driving it on a chilly day.

This is an important UTV buying point. ATVs and UTVs have similarities but to fully exploit either you need to add extras. With an ATV, a tow hitch and access to a trailer are a must if you need to carry anything other than items that can be strapped to the racks. On a UTV, a windscreen and roof add cost but make a huge difference to the vehicle's usability. The Pioneer felt naked in this UTV group.

Despite a lack of a rear diff and power steering, the Pioneer proved agile in two-wheel drive, the steering weighting up but not becoming too heavy when all-wheel drive was selected. Over steep terrain the transmission worked well, although it was best to slow to a near stop before tackling really steep descents. This was to enable the automatic gearbox to start in the lowest of its three speeds, backing off the throttle then allowing the Pioneer to trickle down the slope without using the brakes in four-wheel drive. In two-wheel

drive we found the rear of the UTV could slip out when towing down our fiercest test slopes. As a general run-around, the Pioneer proved quiet and we suspect frugal too, the fuel gauge having as much resilience to movement as the team had to taking the machine out in the rain. The small doors are initially a fiddle to open, their catch locating on the inside, but this is something we soon overlooked as the doors do help keep dew, thrown up when driving, out of the cab. All appreciated the dash-mounted parking brake that held well on slopes. The rear load bay is rated at 386kg, towing capacity coming in at 680kg. As to build quality, thought needs to go into keeping muck out of the engine bay and some of the wiring on our test machine looked vulnerable to damage. Otherwise everything felt Honda tough, the engine and transmission really suiting the Pioneer well. As to retail prices, these start at £11,500, the four-seat Pioneer 700-4 coming in at £12,652.

Kawasaki Mule Pro DXT

Park a Mule Pro next to any of the other UTV models in this line-up, and it's clear this full-size UTV unit is in a different class. Supplied in DXT four-seater guise, the Mule Pro retained a load space that was still 0.56m long with the rear seats in place. Make no mistake, this is a long UTV and one that offers a load bay that stretches to a max of 1.38m on DX two-seat versions. If you are after a UTV with a big cargo bay, this is the one to go for. Load capacity, which importantly factors in carrying two people, is 453kg.

Power is provided by a three-cylinder 993cc diesel developing a nominal 24hp, and the Mule proceeds at a pace that will not overly frustrate the operator. The downside is that the engine can be on the vocal side, conversions between operator and passenger needing to be raised. This is without a full cab

fitted. As standard, Kawasaki fits lower doors to the Mule Pro series and these, when combined with the available screen and roof options, provide decent protection. A full cab, with heater, lists as an option with choices of just a front screen and wiper with roof and more comprehensive half-cab packages.

When we tried the two-seat Mule Pro DX we commented that, despite the bench seats having relatively thin padding, the vehicle was nonetheless a comfortable drive, and this was something all the test team noted as a DXT Pro. Gone is the leaf sprung rear end of earlier 'big' diesel Mules, the independent rear of these latest Pro models delivering 220mm of travel.

Sticking with comfort, the benches measure around 3.0m in width, with room for three but

seat belts for two. Clearly this makes a Mule DX a strict two-seater and the DXT as tested a four-person alternative. From a practical point, the ability to slide across the bench to get in or out from either side is a big plus.

If you are after a UTV that can be specified to match a diverse range of needs, run on red diesel, have enough go to not frustrate, suit applications where ability over tough terrain is matched with a big load area, then the Mule DX or DXT has a lot to commend it. It will tow up to 907kg, too.

Our suggestion is to look at a screen and roof package as a 'must have', this adding just under £1,850 to the four-seat DXT list price of £13,279. The two-seat DX retails for £12,079, a half-cab hiking the total by about £1,500. A Mule certainly kicks hard for the money.



Passengers are well catered for in the Kawasaki Mule Pro DXT, the rear load bay retaining enough space for a bit of load carrying. Folding the rear seats takes a bit of practice, but this version of the Mule is extremely versatile.



Utilitarian bench suits the Mule, making it easy to slide in or out from either side. Doors open wide and provide protection from muck and water. Side bars on roll frame get in the way as with other models of UTV.



Owners of older Mules will appreciate the independent rear suspension. Less obvious changes are CV as opposed to UJ drivshafts, disc brakes and a proper road-ready lighting kit.



Long wand transmission lever does the job on the frills-free dash

Dash-mounted parking brake is easy to get at.



Even with the rear seats in place, the Mule DXT retains a handy amount of room in the rear bay. Sections in the side and rear panels allow a divider to be added, but they also trap dirt and debris.



Muck protection decent and service access generally OK but...



...daily oil check a fiddle, access to the dipstick being covered by a panel that is tricky to remove and refit. We left it off.

Polaris Ranger 570 EPS EU



Polaris has a Ranger model to suit a wide range of needs and budgets, the entry-level 570 EU starting at £8,123 and climbing to £9,373 for a 570 EPS 'tractor' model. 2019 models will come with a roof and rear polycarbonate screen as standard; a screen will be extra but is well worth fitting.



Although it does not do the Ranger 570 full justice, it is fair to look on the 570 as a good ATV alternative with a decent 454kg total payload.



Analogue speedo looks good with blue backlighting, the digital display including a clock.



Offering two separate seats, with the parking brake in between, the Ranger provides a comfortable operating environment that appears to be well screwed together. As with other makes and models, net screens and side extensions on the roll-over bar get in the way.



No excuse for not checking the vital fluids. The bonnet tilts completely out of the way.



We weren't overly fond of the long transmission lever on the Sportsman 570 ATV, but the same control in the Ranger works well and slots neatly into the desired position. A notched gate could make matters even easier.



As with other UTVs, engine bay guarding is sparse on the Ranger. Do manufacturers only operate test models in the dry?

At profi we have had a bit of a soft spot for Polaris Ranger models. Early examples offered the ability to carry three people in relative comfort matched to pretty near ATV off-road performance. A couple of decades on and we guess what? Polaris's smallest model in the Ranger line-up, the 570, remains on the money, albeit with seating for just two.

Priced from £8,123 for the entry-level EU version through to £9,373 for the 570 EPS T1B range-topper, our 570 EPS EU mid-spec test 2018 model had power steering but this spec combination is no longer offered. Powered by a single-pot petrol engine delivering a claimed 44hp, the Ranger is not short of go. As with the Sportsman 570, with which it shares the same engine, power delivery is

smooth and quiet, the engine delivering a generous 48Nm of torque that hooks up well with the CVT transmission. Even in tough going we found little need to trouble low ratio.

As a general run-about, the Ranger's easy steering and simple operation had it pressed into service when the test task was simply to check stock or distribute a few bags of feed. We can see a UTV like this winning over a good number of ATV users as it is a doddle to get in and out. The handbrake position does make sliding in from the 'wrong' side a pain at times, but being able to pull the lever on when hopping out to open a gate does make up for this. Polaris offers the Ranger with half-cab and full-cab choices, the screens and roof of the

test model providing good weather protection and a draught-free ride. Although they do not have the luxury of wind-down windows, the doors of the full cab option are worth considering as they offer good weather sealing. Half-cab prices range from £1,500, doors and a heater both featuring on the options list.

If you want to spec up a Ranger with ADC Automatic Descent Control, you can – but it will add to the bottom line without improving on the base vehicle's 226kg load bay and 600kg towing capacity. These stats should be matched to the Ranger's physical size and pricing. Make no mistake, this diminutive UTV is capable and much more than just a decent alternative for those looking to move over from an ATV.

Yamaha Viking

The Viking has a low seating position, meaning it was difficult to see over the front of the UTV. Add the cab and a sizeable gap between the dash and the seats, and the overall effect was to make the whole driving experience feel remote. Not a great start.

It was once we began to use the Viking, however, that matters improved. Think of a limpet sticking to a rock and you will appreciate just how secure this UTV feels on steep slopes and sidling ground. One of the test team who had resolutely refused to tackle our steep test slope, even as a passenger, took the Viking up and down it without flinching.

The same applies to the way it is made. This UTV looks tough from stern to tip, with details such as tightly routed wiring and chunky controls all boding well. Although the guarding around the engine bay was incomplete, the design lends itself to easily adding simple shielding to keep muck out.

Other little details include mounting the centre seat of the three-person cab back to help improve shoulder room, and siting the parking brake on the dash top and well out of the way. Power steering and full engine braking, which works well, come as standard, too. As to capacity, the rear bed is rated at 272kg. If you are after a UTV that needs to work in some tricky terrain, the Viking is worth a serious look. Stable and able, it should be up to the stiffest of climbs. Want a cabbed UTV for gentle stock checking and a big cargo bay? Perhaps less so.

As to prices, the Viking is priced from £12,749, this including EPS dual rate power steering and proper hill descent control as standard. Low side doors are part of the standard package, but a cab roof plus front and rear screens are options. These will add around £1,500 and we suggest are 'must haves'.



Fully glazed cab option looks and feels like a hastily conceived add-on. You don't get much spec choice with the Viking, power steering and active downhill engine braking coming as standard. Low seating compromises the view to the front but inspires confidence in steep going.



Over-centre clamps lock the rear tailgate firmly in place, the Viking proving able to maintain a fair pace over rough ground in part due to the good suspension set-up.



Bolt-on heater pack sits neatly behind removable passenger grab, the latter having finger trapping clearance with the cab door handle.



The Viking's rear load bed is not overly large, but it looks built for farm life. Side clamps lock tailgate firmly in place but a central catch would be handier.



Engine bay needs guards to prevent it filling with muck, but at least making a set and fitting them looks like a simple job.

Three separate seats, with some stowage underneath. Though they can get in the way when getting in and out, extended side guards work well with the stubby doors that are fitted to the standard model without a cab. The Viking comes alive across tough terrain.

Solidly made, the cab looks good but low seating delivers an odd driving position. There is a cupholder for everyone plus a spare for anyone you meet on your travels.



Further profi reading

Kubota RTV X900 driving impression	05/15	Can-Am Defender HD10 driving impression	06/16	Kawasaki Mule Pro DX driving impression	01/17	Honda Pioneer driving impression	03/17
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