



Precision Built for Poultry: Why Manitou's Tailored Telehandlers Are Driving Efficiency at Pedersen



A bespoke fleet of customer-specified Manitou telehandlers is at the heart of daily operations for poultry cleaning specialist Pedersen Contracting Services. Through Manitou's advanced Configurator (CPQ) system, 18 telehandlers have been built to meet the exact operational requirements of the business, ensuring they are precisely suited to the high-pressure, large-scale cleaning jobs carried out by 15 teams across the UK, capable of cleaning out up to 200,000 square feet of poultry housing per day.

Established over 35 years ago, Pedersen has grown from a small agricultural contracting business into one of the UK's largest poultry cleaning services, running 40 lorries, 32 telehandlers, and 60 compact loaders. Operating from Lincolnshire, their work spans from Fife to Suffolk and out to the Welsh border.

"We began offering poultry cleaning services in 1989, and that quickly became the focus of the business," says managing director Chris Blades. "Now, we operate a fleet of lorries that transport specialist equipment and poultry litter for use in power generation, anaerobic digestion, and as fertiliser all across the country."

With such a tight turnaround window—typically only five to nine days to clean and prepare poultry sheds—machine reliability, performance, and the right specification are crucial.

"We started by feeding Flixborough power station but have since diversified into supplying AD plants too. We can put 2,000 tonnes of waste material from poultry houses into a site in a day, and we average between 10 and 12,000 tonnes of litter a week," he adds.

The Manitou telehandlers do the bulk of the work, clearing the sheds and loading the lorries. With a 2.5 tonne lift capacity and hydrostatic transmission, the MLT 625 has been a mainstay in the fleet for years.

"We have been moving over from other brands to increase the fleet of Manitou machines because they are the best for the job. The key for us is reliability and dealer support and we have had both from B&B Machinery and Manitou over the years," he says.

The strength of the relationship between Pedersen, B&B Machinery, and Manitou stems from Manitou's ability to precisely meet Pedersen's operational requirements through its factory configuration system. Both the MLT 625 and MLT 630 have been individually tailored at the build stage, ensuring each machine is perfectly suited to the specific demands of poultry house environments. Manitou's configurable build process has been key in meeting Pedersen's varying needs—demonstrating how the system can adapt to suit different customer requirements.

"We love the MLT 625 but wanted more lifting capacity to improve our operating speed in larger sheds. However, the entry and passageways were no larger in these sheds, so to get a machine with more lift capacity meant making some alterations," he says.

The tyres on the MLT 630 were changed to lower it and the screen guard and wipers were also changed to enable it to work in the tight spaces.

"B&B made all the enquiries with the factory and came back to us with a specification that was millimetre perfect for what we needed. With 20% greater lift capacity we could either do the job faster or carry out work on larger areas in the same time as with the MLT 625," he says.

Changing the tyres offered the option to reduce the overall width of the MLT 630 by 14 centimetres or lower the height by up to 8 centimetres.

"It provided the flexibility to adapt the MLT 630 for certain types of housing and now we have specially adapted models that run on different tyres and have different screens. Manitou was even able to fit different length wipers so that our operators get a better view in the dusty conditions," he says.

The MLT 625 and 630 have a lift capacity difference of half a tonne but are very different machines. The larger 630 is powered by a Deutz engine, producing 116 horsepower and 460 Nm of torque. The smaller 625, with its Kubota engine, offers 75 horsepower and a more modest 265 Nm of torque.

"It's not a case of one or the other, they both have their place. The 625 is efficient and nimble at less than 2 metres high and 1.79 metres wide. Whereas the 630 is 15% wider at 2.06 metres. Both meet the challenges we face, but to be able to get the lifting power of the 630 into a poultry shed has been a game changer for us," he says.

Manitou's hydrostatic transmission has also been a big factor in the business's decision to migrate the majority of its handlers to the brand. The transmission offers stepless drive with two gears for forward and reverse, but the larger 630 can operate at speeds of up to 38km/h compared to 25km/h for the 625.

"We rarely reach these speeds. For us the focus is on controlled working in tight conditions, and the machines are going backwards as much as forwards so the strain on the transmission is significant. Despite this, and the dusty conditions the handlers work in, we have never had a transmission problem," he says.

The cab of both Manitou machines has also proved an important part of the decision to invest in more. Since the launch of its new cab layout in 2016, complete with upgraded seat, suspension, and armrest, Manitou has continued refining its operator interface.

“Operators appreciate the seating position, visibility and quiet of the cab. Our teams are often operating these for over 8 hours a day, and half of that time can be in reverse, so the seating position and the view from the seat are of paramount importance to reduce operator fatigue,” he says.

The JSM joystick, a standout feature on all Manitou models, is mounted on a floating armrest that moves with the seat—providing consistent comfort for the operator, even over uneven terrain. This design allows all hydraulic functions and the forward/reverse motion to be controlled with one hand, freeing the other to remain on the steering wheel. “It is ergonomic and easy to use for long periods without fatigue, so we have no complaints from operators using the Manitous for long periods,” he says.

At the end of each job, strict biosecurity protocols mean every machine must be thoroughly cleaned. With the Manitou telehandlers, that process is noticeably quicker and more efficient thanks to their thoughtful design.

With this in mind, Manitou has made the job easier by fitting a panel at the rear of the boom that folds down, giving operators better access to typically hard-to-reach areas—ensuring a thorough clean where it matters most, explains Mr Blades. “It gives us better access which makes the cleaning process faster and more effective, something that's essential for meeting our biosecurity standards.”

With the strain on the machines and the dirty working conditions, backup and performance data has been used to help prevent any unwanted breakdowns.

“Manitou offers EasyManager, which feeds information from every machine to us and B&B, so that any potential faults can be identified before they cause an issue. There is also a positioning system that enables B&B's engineers to locate the machine quickly and easily if onsite maintenance is required,” he says.

With the growing popularity of Manitou across the region, B&B Tractors established its Swineshead depot as a dedicated Manitou specialist centre, B&B Machinery in February 2023.

“The support from B&B, and the knowledge that there is a dedicated team on the doorstep, has impacted on our decision to change more of the fleet to Manitou and I can see us switching further machines in the future,” concludes Mr Blades.

James Bowring, B&B Group Director comments “We established B&B Machinery in Swineshead to give our Manitou customers in Lincolnshire and the surrounding area the dedicated support they require. Whether it's through tailored machine builds, or fast access to parts and expert servicing, our focus is on making sure customers have what they need, when they need it. We're here to support them every step of the way”

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