




Versatile Manitou fits busy dairy operation

Cheshire-based Bidlea Dairy updated its machinery fleet with a new Manitou MLT 741-140 V+ to help manage a diverse dairy farm operation that milks 300 cows. The power, efficiency and overall comfort of the 741 has quickly made it a vital machine for everyday work.

Brothers Adam and Ryan Brown made the choice to invest in the 741 which was supplied by local dealer Cheshire Farm Machinery. Adam chose to specify it in a striking, and rare, black and red colourway to fit in with the business's Bidlea branding.

As part of the family partnership, Adam's time is spent helping to manage products made using the farm's milk, including ice-cream and milkshakes, which have been sold through an onsite vending machine, café and wholesale agreements with local retailers since 2019.

Ryan helps manage the working farm with its 650 acres of grass, maize and winter wheat which are grown to feed 800 head of cattle. The Manitou replaced a JCB, which Ryan suggests was a decision that had to be made to help improve operations at the business's Orchards Farm, near Knutsford in Cheshire.



“Adam and I are third generation, and when our grandfather bought the farm it was largely producing fruit. He introduced a dairy and, since then, we have grown steadily to the 300 milkers we have today. We graze the cows as much as possible because we see it as important for the farm’s produce to be seen as ‘free range’. However, with the climate getting wetter through winter, turnout is getting pushed back every year,” he says.

This means more work in the yard and that is where the Manitou has excelled. As one of four loaders which includes two smaller MLT 625 Manitous, the 741 was brought in to be the largest workhorse. With its near seven metre lifting height, 136 horsepower Deutz engine and compact design, it fits the farm’s setup well.

“We have a traditional farm setup which means narrow passages and relatively small buildings. The aim was to find a loader that could make easy work of the lifting requirements, run all day, and make its way around without catching roofs or getting too close to livestock. The Manitou’s hand throttle and speed limiter also come in handy when we are feeding,” says Ryan.

The nimble, modestly proportioned Manitou handles well around the farm and looks as if it was made for the space. It handles daily mucking out, bedding and feeding work easily and it also has the weight and power to handle buck raking and clamping silage.

“It’s a big ask of any machine to be small and agile enough to nip around our buildings, but also heavy and powerful enough to work in the field and on the clamp. So far, the Manitou has proved it can do it all,” says Ryan.

The farm had its first Manitou in the early 1990s when the brother’s father chose the brand’s smaller, buggy-style loaders. The first loader came in the shape of an MLT 625 in 2001 and ever since there has been a complement of Manitous to handle the bulk of farm work. Cheshire Farm Machinery’s Stewart Whitlow suggested the MLT 741 and facilitated the unique colourway to fit in with the business’s Bidlea branding.

“Stewart and the team are always on hand and have been a reliable partner to us for the last few years. The MLT 741 is the perfect fit for us and we all love the footwell and the cab. There is so much more space and the cutout footwell leaves plenty of room for big boots and knees. There are little touches with this model that helped it to stand out, like the side window wiper so that we can clear the screen when it’s dusty or wet,” he says.

The MLT 741 weighs in at almost eight tonnes, but Ryan says the powerful Deutz engine coupled to a hydrostatic CVT gearbox makes it more responsive than its size would suggest. He’s also been particularly impressed by the boom operation which offers an auto function to lift and extend simultaneously.

“The joystick is in a comfortable position and it feels a bit like a mouse on a computer to operate. We also like the return function which sees the bucket come down and reset to the right angle to dig again. Sometimes, little features make all the difference and every minute saved is welcomed,” he adds.

Further efficiencies have been noticed, including a car-like engine shut off which can be set to cut the engine after a given time. Manitou’s stop and start function not only stops the noise from the engine constantly filling the sheds, but is also helping to reduce fuel consumption.



“It’s proved more economical and, with its Manitou Connect software, we can see the savings. The 741 also communicates with Cheshire Farm Machinery to report any faults and feedback hours operated, idle time and fuel consumption,” he says.

Data accrued by the software can also be viewed in the myManitou mobile application, and handily placed QR codes on the 741 can be used to offer help and advice on day to day maintenance.

“It’s good having the QR codes, it helps to find things and better understand how to carry out routine maintenance. However, the 741 has proved easy to live with, especially the auto lube function which means it essentially greases itself and all we have to do is refill the reservoir,” he says.

All of this has helped with the ongoing and demanding work carried out by the 741, which is started at 7am every morning and is rarely left idle until the end of the day.

“We are working on a new calf shed so the 741 has been a big help moving everything from steels to materials. As we move towards silage season it will be pushed, but we have every confidence it will perform both in the field and the yard. It has already proved itself a vital part of the farm’s fleet and it really looks the part with its black finish and Bidlea branding,” he concludes.