

FARM MACHINERY

JOURNAL

February 2021 // Issue 82 // £4.20

www.farmmachineryjournal.co.uk

TESTED!

Ploughing match

Can a new
John Deere
7R 330
outrun a
Fendt 939 in
the furrow?



**WHY A MASSEY
FERGUSON 6718S
AND LOADER
OUTSHINES A
TELEHANDLER**

**OPERATOR
REVIEW**



KING OF QUADS
HOW SUZUKI QUIETLY
STOLE THE CROWN FROM
ITS JAPANESE RIVALS



FARMER VERDICT

**EASY BY NAME, EASY BY
NATURE FOR SKY'S 4M DRILL**

AFFORDABLE POWER

**THE CLAAS XERION THAT
OFFERS UNBEATABLE VALUE**

Long live the King

The Suzuki KingQuad 500AXi underwent an extensive overhaul in 2019, keeping pace with rivals, but can it still keep its head above water? *FMJ* put one through its paces

WORDS AND IMAGES **SIMON HENLEY**

Suzuki pioneered the four-wheel ATV back in 1983 and since then it has introduced some ground-breaking design developments. But if we're being honest, the Japanese manufacturer does take a rather subtle marketing approach when it comes to promoting the virtues of its vehicles to Britain's farmers.

Honda dominates the UK market when it comes to seating farmers on quad bikes. And if it's outright dependability you're looking for there's hardly a better choice. But what if you want a bit more than

dependability from your ATV?

Park the new Suzuki KingQuad 500AXi next to a new Honda TRX520 FA6 and it's hard to tell them apart in terms of their basic chassis design and appearance. Sure, they each have their own unique features and styling nuances, but you can't deny they look very similar. Yet, appearances can be deceptive.

The KingQuad (KQ) line-up was introduced in 2005 and has proved to be immensely successful on a global scale. At the time of its launch, the KingQuad 700 FI introduced the first electronic fuel-injected engine to be

A handlebar-mounted push-button is used to engage drive modes. The locking front differential makes the Suzuki almost unstoppable in difficult conditions



Above and top: It looks tall but swinging a leg over the saddle of the KingQuad takes no effort. The padded seat is arguably one of the most comfortable in this class



This image and far left inset: All-round independent double wishbone suspension provides sharp handling during high-speed operation. Full throttle acceleration from a standing start is impressive

TECH SPECS

Suzuki KingQuad 500AXi

Engine 493cc OHC/4-Valve/single-cylinder

Power 39hp

Transmission Stepless belt drive (CVT)

Four-wheel drive Switchable 2WD/4WD

Differential Front diff-lock

Front suspension Independent, double wishbone

Rear suspension Independent, double wishbone

Suspension travel Front 170mm, rear 196mm

Towing capacity 600kg

Carrying capacity 30kg front/60kg rear

Ground clearance 260mm

Dry weight 324kg

Turn radius 6.91m

List price £7399 (no power steering)

“Chuck it into a sweeping turn and it will respond by drifting in a perfect power slide”



Left and below inset: The gear selector moves freely through its gate. The digital instrument panel is basic but easy to read



forward 48 degrees to lower the centre of gravity, features a four-valve cylinder head with twin spark plugs and cranks out a healthy 39hp.

Engine improvements in the latest models include an uprated ignition system, which has been tweaked for improved throttle response and greater torque. Inside the engine, there's now a piston oil jet in the crankcase, which sprays oil on the underside of the piston to improve lubrication and maintain cooler engine temperatures in extreme conditions.

As before, a fender-mounted gated shift lever controls a two-range QuadMatic TM belt-drive CVT transmission, which features an engine braking system for descending hills or pulling heavy loads. The

Below: Underneath, the Suzuki 500AXi features a polypropylene skid-plate to protect the transmission and differentials from damage when working on uneven and difficult terrain

used in a commercial ATV, providing what was, at the time, an unprecedented level of throttle response in a utility four-wheeler.

In 2009 Suzuki introduced a torque-sensitive electric power steering (EPS) system for its updated 750AXi and 500AXi KQ models, which had been developed from its passenger cars. A decade later, in 2019, both the KingQuad 750 and the 500 were completely revamped, with all new styling, a new body design, an upgraded chassis and an improved CVT.

The focus of this evaluation is the latest KingQuad 500AXi with optional EPS, which among others competes directly with the aforementioned Honda Foreman TRX520 FA6. *FMJ*

spent a week with the new KingQuad and we subjected it to a variety of tests, ranging from general pottering around the farm with straw bales and bags of feed to herding cattle.

We also used it for towing a trailer loaded with up to 400kg of pig feed. In addition to general daily chores, we also put the Suzuki through its paces to see how well it handled, not only on graded farm tracks but also in the extreme mud and the wet.

Useful upgrades

The latest KingQuad 500AXi is equipped with a 493cc single-cylinder, overhead cam, fuel-injected engine. This liquid-cooled unit is canted



Introduced in 2019, the new Suzuki KingQuads received new styling, a stiffened chassis, an improved CVT and increased storage and towing capacity



Top and above inset: The petrol tank sits beneath the driver's seat to reduce the centre of gravity. The fuel cap is at the rear

► Suzuki CVT design retains belt tension at all times by using a one-way clutch to engage the drive. It has also been tweaked to be more responsive, by reducing roller weights and increasing the spring tension on the drive pulley.

Beneath its moulded plastic body panels, the KQ frame has been beefed up with thicker mainframe tubes and stronger suspension mounting points.

“Suzuki is a country mile ahead when it comes to refinement, power and riding satisfaction”

Now that the frame is stronger, towing capacity is an impressive 600kg, plus 30kg on the front rack and 60kg on the rear. Additionally, the previous plate-type tow hitch mounting system has been replaced by a two-inch square hitch receiver.

In the braking department, the KQ features twin discs up front and a sealed and enclosed multi-disc brake disc system on the rear axle, which is designed to give maximum ground clearance. A generously sized 17-litre

fuel tank is positioned in the frame beneath the driver's seat to keep the centre of gravity as low as possible.

No need for neutral

With the left-hand (rear) brake/park lever pulled in the KQ will fire up in any gear, so there's no fumbling to find neutral if you've shut it off in gear. The engine fires immediately, quickly settles to a smooth idle, and once you get moving it soon reaches operating temperature.

Once you start using the KingQuad 500, from an operational perspective it feels very much like the Honda TRX 520. Both the Honda FA6 and the Suzuki use all-round independent double wishbone suspension to give the tyres greater contact over rough terrain and better handling. Yet even though the suspension geometry on both machines is very similar, the Suzuki feels just that bit sharper than the Honda, particularly when you're travelling at speed.

The difference between the Suzuki and its Honda nemesis is the engine. Honda relies on a single-pot overhead-valve petrol unit, which at anything above idle feels thrashy, unrefined and quickly runs out of steam when pushed to the limit. In contrast, the Suzuki engine is a peach, with tons of usable torque at low revs and seamless power delivery

throughout the entire rev range.

A few paragraphs back we mentioned Suzuki had tweaked its CVT to be more responsive. We've no argument here. Deliberately provoked, the 500AXi launches from a standing start like a drag-racer at Santa Pod. Terminal velocity is in excess of 50mph and with the CVT doing all the work it doesn't take long to get there.

In the corners the Suzuki can live with the best of them thanks to its well set-up suspension. Chuck it into a sweeping turn on a gravel track at speed, with the engine at full throttle, and it will respond by drifting through the corner in a perfect power slide, with its inside front wheel lifting slightly off the ground.

Time and again we tried to unsettle the 500AXi, both on and off road, but not once did it give way to our demands. In fact, those of us who used the bike for this extravagant style of riding frequently walked away with a grin from ear to ear. We concluded better tyres would improve off-road traction, but for most applications this would be unnecessary.

Daily life

Having established that Evel Knievel could have fun riding the new KingQuad, we turned our focus to living with the bike on a daily basis, starting with the riding position. This Suzuki is a pretty tall bike, but swinging a leg over the saddle takes no effort and the thickly padded T-seat design is arguably one of the most comfortable in this class.

The instruments are large and easy to read, while the four-wheel drive system is simple and easy to use, with a handlebar mounted push-button to engage two-wheel drive, four-wheel drive and a diff-lock

Below: Pictured during the daily routine of checking the suckler herd, the Suzuki had no problem towing a 150kg load through muddy gateways and across pastures, remaining composed at all times





Left: Thicker chassis tubes and upgraded suspension mounts provide a useful 60kg of carrying capacity on the tubular steel rear rack, however the lift height was greater than some competitive ATVs

Below and below inset: The handlebar-mounted headlight provides directional lighting for improved night operation. A 12v socket (inset) provides power for accessories like slug pellet applicators or sprayers

What did we think?

Well, obviously we liked it. The Suzuki KingQuad has arguably been an anomaly in the past, sitting quietly in the background while its competitors make all the noise. Its looks have always been understated and if you didn't know better you could make the mistake of walking past it in a line-up with all of its competitors.

The 500cc ATV market is the most competitive in the UK, and in a world where people increasingly demand greater value for their money the new KingQuad has a great deal to offer. Honestly, while Honda might just have the edge on fit and finish, Suzuki is a country mile ahead when it comes to refinement, power and overall riding satisfaction. The fact remains, it's not called the King Quad for nothing!

FMJ

mode. Essentially, this means when you hit the four-wheel drive button you get three-wheel drive and when you engage the diff-lock you get true four-wheel drive. It works well and it's instantaneous.

The gear selector mounted on the left-hand fender moves freely through its dog-leg gate to select the required ratios. Unlike some other ATVs we have tested, there was never any need to start rocking the KingQuad to get it in or out of gear.

The park brake is a lock that clamps the left-hand brake lever to the handlebars and activates the rear brake rather than being in the expected P position in the transmission gate. It's simpler than the system used on the Honda but still requires two hands.

The handlebar position feels a little higher than some competitive ATVs, but you never feel as if you are

perched on top of the KingQuad. On the plus side, the handlebar height has the advantage of giving you more steering leverage when making tight manoeuvres or riding in challenging conditions.

The power steering is set up so that it gets stiffer the faster you ride, and Suzuki has also tweaked the steering geometry. In general use the steering feels completely neutral, in the sense that you're not really aware of its assistance. That in itself can only be considered an achievement.

With a loaded trailer there was very little understeer and the Suzuki actually feels very composed with weight on the drawbar. The design of the CVT ensures there is plenty of engine braking when it comes to descending grades.

