

Owner's Report On "Best & Worst" Pickups

Are you satisfied with your pickup? How could it be improved? Have you modified your pickup in any way? What accessories have you bought for it?

These are some of the questions we asked randomly selected pickup owners in an effort to highlight those pickups that perform with flying colors, and to pinpoint the "lemons" that fail because of poor performance, or failure of the dealer or company to provide service.

Here's how the survey shaped up:

Ray Cook, Seymour, Iowa: "My 1996 Dodge Ram 1500 2-WD performs great and I like the 360 cu. in. engine. But the paint job is a big problem. My pickup has been painted three times and now the paint is coming off again. The company paid for the first paint jobs, but now they say that it's my problem. The paint started coming off when the pickup was only six months old. I'm very disappointed with Chrysler."

Ronald Korycki, New Hampton, N.Y.: "Our 1991 Chevrolet Scottsdale 4-WD works great. The only problem is that the back corners of the cab are rusting out. We added a window vent visor to keep the cab cool during the summer. It lets you leave the windows open a little but the rain can't get in. We bought them through the J.C. Whitney catalog (1 J.C. Whitney Way, P.O. Box 3000, LaSalle, Ill. 61301 ph 800 726-4466).

Harold E. Keller, Hoyt, Kan.: "It's well designed and well built," says Harold, pleased with his 1996 Dodge Ram 2500 extended cab 4-WD equipped with a Cummins diesel engine and 5-speed transmission. "The cab is roomy and comfortable. I'm 6 ft. 4 in. tall and weigh 260 lbs. but I have plenty of room. We use it to pull a livestock trailer and swather trailer, and have also hauled a 10 1/2-ft. slide-in camper. It has excellent towing capacity with plenty of power. It gets about 22 mpg empty and 16 mpg loaded or pulling a trailer. My only complaint is that the paint chips easily and will scratch through to the primer at the slightest touch. We live on a gravel road so I added DeeZee running boards in order to protect the sides. We also bought a hitch receiver from Tractor Supply Co. Both are good products."

Harold E. Howard, Hiawatha, Kan.: "My 1995 Dodge Ram 250 equipped with a diesel engine and automatic transmission is my best buy. It gets 11 mpg pulling a load and 20 to 24 mpg empty."

Carlos Buckles, Junction City, Kan.: Carlos has had problems with his 1999 Chevrolet 1500 Silverado 4-WD equipped with a 5.3-liter engine. "After I drive it for a short time the engine develops a noise and power drops. My dealer can't fix the problem. I've been told by the shop foreman that there are a lot of similar complaints. I wrote a letter to the company, but it was never answered."

Dale English, Paris, Ill.: "My 1999 GM Sierra 1500 1/2-ton 4-WD has the power of a 3/4-ton model," says Dale. "It rides smooth for a 4-WD. I can switch from 2 to 4-WD by simply touching a button, which I really like."

Leo Peterson, Kansas City, Mo.: "My Ford F-150 XL 200 equipped with a V-6 engine and automatic transmission and has a smooth ride. It averages about 20 mpg."

Kervyn Mach, Huber Heights, Ohio: "I bought my 1996 Ford Ranger used with 41,000 miles on it. I use it to drive to work and to haul an occasional load of garden supplies or building materials. It does that satisfactorily and the 4-liter engine gets about

17 mpg. The extended cab lets me put the seat back far enough to be comfortable. It has anti-lock brakes which I really like.

"My 6-year-old grand daughter thinks the jump seats are neat. But anyone larger would not agree. The pickup has wind deflectors that let me leave the windows down an inch or so when I park it, without having to worry about rain."

T.C. Mallett, Austin, Texas: "I really like my 1990 Chevrolet 3/4-ton 4-WD pickup

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equipped with a 350 cu. in. engine and 4-speed manual transmission. It has 194,000 miles and spends a lot of time on rough gravel roads and off the road on my ranch. The body is holding up well, and the paint still looks new. However, the air conditioner is marginal in our 100 degree summers. The original radiator wasn't adequate to handle the air conditioner with the engine idling as we checked on cattle in our pastures during the summer. I installed a headache rack and grille guard. If I were in the market for a new pickup I'd probably buy a 2001 Chevrolet 4-WD crew cab model equipped with a Duramax diesel engine. I think it's the best looking pickup coming out."

William Kohl, Appleton, Wis.: William nominates his 1994 Chevrolet K-1500 4-WD extended cab pickup as his "best buy". "It has more than 62,000 miles on it and all I've done is put new front brakes in it. It rides smooth and the cab has plenty of room and is quiet. My only complaint is that it's hard to change the oil filter. It's a small filter and it's placed horizontally right above the driveshaft where it's hard to reach. Also, I wish they would install universal joints with grease fittings on the driveline. I put a drain plug on the transmission cover in order to make it easier to change the transmission fluid and filter, and so that it's not such a messy job."

Peter E. Tintes, Belgrade, Minn.: "I'm satisfied with my 1995 Ford F-250 extended cab 4-WD except that it's somewhat hard on fuel. The manufacturers really don't seem to care about fuel economy. It's not mandated, and we have to have a pickup, so we're stuck. The body on this pickup sits very high so I think it should have a running board as standard equipment."

Paul Sandoz, Springfield, Mo.: "I like my 1994 Ford F-150 2-WD equipped with a 5-liter V-8 engine. All I've done is put new spark plugs in at 90,000 miles and fix a leak in the automatic transmission at 100,000 miles. The pickup now has more than 162,000 miles on it. I'd like to have cruise control on it but you can't get it without hav-

ing to order power windows and power locks, too."

Roger Joens, Council Bluffs, Iowa: "I'm well satisfied with my 2000 Chevrolet Silverado. I was a Ford owner for 30 years, but now I like the looks and quality of the Chevy better. I especially prefer the looks and design of the interior, hood, and front grill. I get 14 mpg in the city which I don't think is out of line. I bought a hitch from Council Hitch Service in Council Bluffs, Iowa. They make the hitches themselves. They're good, strong hitches that are reasonably priced."

Robert J. Cox, Rosedale, Ind.: Robert says he's "generally satisfied" with his 1996 Ford F-150 equipped with a 351 cu. in. gas engine, but that it nevertheless could use a few improvements. "It steers stiffer than my 1979 F-150. The transmission downshifts out of overdrive when going down a hill, which causes the engine to 'rev' at 2,300 to 2,500 rpm's. I realize that my 1979 F-150 doesn't do this because it's equipped with a 460 cu. in. engine and a C-L transmission so it has more available power. I don't know why they didn't put a 460 cu. in. engine in the F-150 I have."

Robert Faith, Lincoln, Ill.: "My 1999 Dodge 250 'Camper Special' is equipped with a 360 cu. in. engine and 4:10 rear end. It has plenty of power but could be more fuel efficient. I use it to pull an 18-ft. 12,000-lb. MacLander trailer loaded with a pair of antique tractors. We go to about 20 shows a year. We also mount a Palomino 13 1/2-ft.

slide-in camper on this pickup which works great for us at tractor shows."

Michael Maynard, Chatham, Ontario: "It's an excellent pickup," says Michael about his 1993 GM SE 1/2-ton 4-WD equipped with a 350 cu. in. engine. "It's okay on fuel economy and does a good job pulling a 16-ft. livestock trailer since it's equipped with extra springs and heavy brakes. It can pull a 10,000-lb. trailer loaded. I added a 10,000-lb. bumper hitch as well as a gooseneck hitch, air bags above the rear springs, a compressor under the hood, and heavier tires. I can carry 3,750 lbs. in the bed."

Joe Cassell, Salina, Kan.: "I like my 1999 Ford F-150. It gets about 20 mpg on the highway."

Wayne Meyer, Hiawatha, Kan.: "I like my 1989 Ford F-150 4-WD equipped with a 6-cyl. engine and 5-speed transmission. I bought a DMI cushion hitch for it. I use my pickup to pull a lot of anhydrous tanks, and this hitch has really helped reduce the shocks when pulling them."

Ken Pursley, Fort Collins, Colo.: Ken's happy with his 1981 Datsun pickup equipped with a diesel engine. "I put a turbocharger on it when it was new and also switched to using Amsoil synthetic oil. It now has almost 200,000 miles and is still going strong."

Tim Kester, Clearwater, Neb.: Tim's the satisfied owner of a 1999 Ford F-250 equipped with a V-10 gas engine and automatic transmission. "It pulls a trailer well but



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