

# Farm Show Readers Nominate Best, Worst Pickups

Are you satisfied with your pickup? How could it be made better? How important is the dealer in deciding what pickup to buy? What's the best pickup ever made? The worst?

These are some of the questions we asked 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.

We found most owners — 87% of the 265 responding — are generally satisfied with their trucks and, even if they've had problems, are willing to work with their dealers to get the "bugs" out. However, some owners would just as soon not depend on dealers and manufacturers at all.

"I'd like to find a good old truck and rebuild it completely. I could do a good job for the \$10,000 or so that new ones cost and I'd know what I had," says Mike Weaver of Fort St. John, British Columbia.

Gerald Austin of Fairbanks, Alaska, feels that today's trucks are built more for leisure than for work. "Many pickups now offer a wider selection of radios or tape players than they do axle ratios or transmissions. Let's forget the little 'hot rod' wheels and offer truck tires that have clearance to wade through mud and snow. Manufacturers should get back to simplicity but offer more 'work type' options," Austin told FARM SHOW.

The breakdown of pickup owners surveyed looked like this: Ford - 38%; Chevrolet - 34%; GMC - 12%; Dodge - 8%; and others, including International and a variety of foreign-made models, at 8%.

## Are you generally satisfied with the performance of your pickup?

Robert Snavely of Breton, Alberta, has been pleased with his 1967 International 1100 since he bought it 14 years ago. "I've never put a wrench on the motor or rear end. The body is a bit shaky now but it still runs very well. The gas mileage is about 20 mpg." Robert suggests one improvement: manufacturers. "Bring back the old heavier frames. Farmers will pay more for something if they know it will last longer."

"We have never been able to get the twin gas tanks to work," says Lloyd Evans of Weiner, Ark., about his 1981 Chevy Silverado. "At 6,000 miles, the motor went out and it took me six weeks to get parts for it. The transmission went out at 11,000 miles. The transmission has an overdrive which is no good at all for farm use."

Pete Chupashko of Vineland, N.J., says his 1970 Ford F100 has held up for 11 years, 135,000 miles and gone through three accidents. "His advice to manufacturers: 'Make more like it!'"

Ford's 1977 250 "Trailer Special"

with a 460 engine, is "underpowered while towing a load," says Jack Workman of Salina, Kan. "The steering is hard to control. I've had it to three alignment shops and talked to two dealers about it. They all say that's the way it was designed and there's nothing they can do about it."

"Other than the motor, I've had pretty good luck. It burned a lot of gas, had insufficient power and used lots of oil. I replaced the piston rings at 36,000 miles and now, at 81,000 miles, they should be replaced again," says Dennis Lynch of Sedley, Sask., about his 1975 Chevy 4WD Silverado with a 400 engine. Besides improvements to the engine, he'd like to see "a V-8 with lockout hubs, increased gas mileage and a power steering pump that won't break."

The 1978 GMC C35 on Oliver Low's farm in Logan, Utah, has had problems. "It's been a beast as far as shifting is concerned. I thought it would get easier to shift but it hasn't. When I bought it, the wheels were out of line and, by the time the dealer got time to fix it, the tires were worn out on one side. It soon had to go back for another alignment, but the warranty had expired so it cost \$30. We were disappointed, too, when the paint started peeling off after the first two months."

"We've had excellent luck!" says Bruce M. Lovdahl of McGregor, N. Dak., pleased with his 1973 Dodge D-100 ½-ton. "Good mileage considering the year it was made. The 4-speed is good for low-speed work, although the slant six is underpowered for a big load. I'll buy another Dodge if this one ever wears out."

In Somerset, N.J., Arnold W. Messmahl's 1977 Ford F100 was one of his "worst buys". "At 35,000 miles the universal joints wore out, followed by the rods, then the electric wiring for the brake lights. The heater switch is not working and, to top it off, the automatic transmission will not shift. All this happened before 37,000 miles."

## "We replaced five universal joints in 50,000 miles."

In Middletown, Ill., Russell Schafer's 1976 Ford 250 4WD generally runs well but he's had trouble with the universal joints. "We replaced them 5 times in 50,000 miles. The drive shaft had to be replaced twice. This is sold as a work vehicle, not a plaything. The manufacturers should make the drive train heavy enough to withstand whatever pull is put on by the engine."

The only trouble with R. A. Dunlap's 1975 Ford ¾-ton V-8 4WD in

Somerton, Ariz., has been the power steering. "I have wide 16.5 by 12 tires that put a heavy load on the power steering pump. They need to put on a heavier pump to handle the use of wide tires, which make hauling heavier loads much safer."

Wm. Harlow Hass of Outlook, Mont., likes his GMC ¾-ton 1980 4WD but says he dislikes "the Spicer front wheel hubs. They should also improve the suspension, electrical wiring and exhaust systems for rugged use."

Ivan Zimmer of Stanford, Mont., is disappointed with his 1979 GMC Sierra ¾-ton 4WD. "The left window channel came unwelded, the muffler broke in two, it's hard to shift gears and the mechanic claims the clutch was bent at the factory. The emergency brake fell off, and I'm putting in the third new starter. I still drive a 1955 Chevy 1½ ton, and a 1949 GMC ¾ ton with no problems. I've had four other GMC trucks, all with good results. This GMC gets 13 mpg whether loaded or unloaded, uphill or down, cloudy or sunny."

Says Gene Reed, of Palmer, Alaska about his Ford F150 4WD 1981 6-cylinder: "It gets good mileage for a 4-wheel drive. Comfortable to ride in and handles well on rough roads. The high gear ratio could be a little lower, and they could do better on the paint job. Instead of the chintzy little plastic tool boxes they install under the hood, they should put the old style tool box under the truckbed where it was more accessible and held more."

Jesse E. Loyd of Hereford, Colo., generally likes his 1980 Ford 4WD ½-ton. "The XLT Ranger cab is quiet, the visibility is good, and the stereo has excellent sound, but the heater and air conditioner fan only runs when it feels like it, even though I've had it fixed three times. It rides nice for a 4-wheel drive and gets about 14 mpg. But I can peel off the paint with a fingernail. Also, the automatic choke needs work."

Ira Felz, owner of a 1981 Volkswagen in Buffalo Gap, S. Dak., says he gets the kind of mileage that's advertised. "We get as high as 51 mpg and never under 46. I'd suggest they make the cab roomier, though."

"I had some transmission trouble after the warranty expired, but otherwise no problems," says Lloyd Martens, of Chadron, Neb., about his 1980 GMC ½ ton 4WD. "I'm looking forward to GMC's new 6.2 liter diesel for 4-wheel drives," he adds.

Lloyd Atchison of Pipestone, Manitoba says the ride in his 1978 Chevy crew cab Silverado C20 is "fantastic compared even to a new car. It'll go 90 miles per hour with no fishtailing. Considering the weight — ¾-ton camper special — and the year, the mileage is good at 12 to 13. The only change I'd make is to add headroom."

"I ordered a straight 4-speed transmission and ended up with a 3-speed overdrive," says Mike Ross, Outlook, Mont., about his 1979 Ford F150. "The transmission, plus a high-speed rear end (2.75:1), makes the pickup virtually useless in soft fields and snow. It has a 302 cu. in. engine, another reason for its lack of power. It's my fault for accepting the pickup as it came and not sticking by the way I ordered it."

Lawrence Corbin of Shelbina, Mo., likes his 1978 Dodge ½-ton diesel but wishes the factory "would equip them with turbochargers to improve the low end acceleration".

## "I don't like the bucking between 25 and 35 miles per hour."

A 1981 Chevy C10 Scottsdale gives Bernard Kinkelaar of Dodge City, Kan., over 21 mpg on the highway. "But I sure don't like the bucking you get between 25 and 35 mph with the clutch-type torque converter. And, I don't think much of the automatic spark control. They should install better insulation, too."

"Color it yellow. Ford really screwed up on this one," says Terrell Hudson, of Unadilla, Georgia, upset with his Ford F350 1980 4WD with 400 engine. "Everything you can imagine has been a problem. The rear wheels lock on the slightest application of the brakes. It has no pulling power, the electrical system is a problem, the sheet metal is too thin and the chassis is not rigid enough. This truck will put a good dealer and his customer in the nut house. We also own a 1977 Ford 250, which is virtually the same as the 1980 except for having no air conditioning. We've had nothing but maintenance problems on that truck, too, in 72,000 miles."

In Cowley, Alberta, Jon Elton has had trouble with his 1976 Chevrolet ¾-ton 4WD. "At 18,000 miles it had a cylinder head failure that cost \$700 to fix. At 22,000 miles the transmission failed and cost \$850. The engine cost \$900 to fix when it failed at 29,000 miles and the transfer case, which failed at 37,000 miles, cost \$450."

Dee Keeton of Kingston, Okla., is happy with his 1981 Chevy C20 after installing a 600 Holley carb, an Edelbrock high-rise manifold and dual exhausts. He suggests that manufacturers "put in a 5-speed overdrive manual transmission or a 4-speed overdrive automatic."

"I've had no problems with my 1973 GM ¾-ton pickup in 130,000 miles, although I overhauled the en-