

"Owner's Report" On Best, Worst Pickups

Are you satisfied with your pickup? How could the manufacturer improve performance, fuel economy, and construction? 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.

"This truck is a lemon and I don't know if it is poor engineering, materials or workmanship," says David S. Erickson, Altona, Ill., about his 1978 Chevrolet C-20 4-WD automatic with high-low transfer case. "In just 70,000 miles we've rebuilt the transfer case and front differential, replaced the odometer, repaired a broken crankshaft, and replaced the engine. The 4-WD has never worked right and when we hook a trailer up to it, the front wheels spin and the rear wheels won't move. We take care of the truck with regular maintenance."

"We've got 180,000 miles on the original motor. We've replaced the carburetor at 170,000 miles, repaired the transmission at 70,000 miles and put in four exhaust systems. Otherwise, we've had no problems except for rust. That could be partially solved by using a thicker gauge of metal and putting drain holes in the box," says James R. Hval, Milestone, Sask., about his 1973 Chevrolet Custom 10.

"The secondary fuel filter on my 1983 K-20 Chevrolet 6.2 diesel Scottsdale is located under the intake manifold which makes it almost impossible to change. The tailgate could be built stronger. Fuel economy at 12 mpg loaded and 25 mpg empty is good," says Robert Hamstad, Finlayson, Minn.

"We've had eight Chevrolets since 1961. We've stayed with them because we always get 100,000 miles or more without any major repairs. We modify Chevy's 350 engine to get more power and better mileage. We install dual exhaust and a modified carburetor and we change the electronic ignition," says Robert Anderson, Raynesford, Mont.

"With a 6-cyl. 300 cu. in. motor in a heavy pickup it's naturally not overloaded with power for towing or on hills but it's much more reliable and has more torque than other V-8's we've owned," says John Dawson, Slave Lake, Alberta, about his 1981 Ford F250 4-WD.

"It's okay now but it took one year to correct all the problems," says Tom Doolittle, Antioch, Ill., about his 1980 Chevrolet K20. "First the transmission seized up and required a total tear down at 400 miles. The starter wouldn't turn the engine over so they replaced it. The engine burned a quart of oil every 700 miles when new. They finally overhauled it at just 2,500 miles. The problem was that the pistons didn't have oil drain slots so oil picked up by the oil control ring wouldn't return to the pan. Since the problems were corrected, this has been an excellent truck."

"Ford has the best engines. They almost never take oil and the bodies don't rust out like Chevy and GMC," says Wallace Fink, Albert Lea, Minn., pleased with his Ford F100 4-WD.

"I converted my pickup over to propane. It works as well as gasoline and costs just 60 cents a gallon versus \$1.00 a gallon for gasoline, so savings are substantial. "We've been very pleased with the performance of our 1978 Ford 3/4-ton," says John Lorberg, Gordonville, Mo.

Ed Perkins, Chauvin, Alberta, has been disappointed with a 1983 Dodge 150 4-WD. "When we first bought it we got 15 mpg but 2 weeks later we were getting only 5 mpg and burning lots of oil. We returned to the dealer for the first of many times and were informed that the motor gaskets were gone. They were replaced and, 900 miles later, went out again. This happened four times. Then, when checking cattle, I hit a rock and the front axle bent, far too easily we felt. Also, the clutch filled easily and regularly with mud. The dealer accused me of abusing the truck but, in the same conversation, admitted that there have been problems with the clutches in these trucks. Another problem is that the cab and box rattled and banged more than my 1970 Ford F-100 which has 280,000 miles on it. We had this Dodge for 8 months and put about 17,000 miles on, which is a minimal amount for us. It spent more time in the shop than on the farm. We traded for our present 1983 Ford diesel."

"The clutch filled easily and regularly with mud."

James Blankespoor, Doon, Iowa, has had trouble with his 1985 Chevrolet 1/2-ton Silverado. "Poor gas mileage, doesn't turn very sharp, and there's no chrome on the outside — just plastic that comes off easily. Poor radio and a poor glove compartment. Everything comes out when you open it up."

"I'm especially pleased with the 6.2 L diesel engine in my 1983 Chevrolet K-10. Performance and fuel economy are both unbelievably great. It's one of the best buys I've ever made," says W. L. Williams, Sumner, Georgia, who put running boards on the pickup to help protect the sides from mud and rocks.

"Manufacturers should take more care when building. At 48,000 miles, the cam and lifters went out on my 1981 Chevrolet 3/4-ton 4-WD with 350 engine. We understand the company is having a problem in this area and might reimburse for the work. The engine also has a constant ping at speeds over 40 mph and then loses power. The dealer has worked on it 10 different times and can't stop it. A factory representative looked at it and thought he'd fixed it but the ping is back," says David C. Kehrl, Manchester, Iowa.

"We had trouble when it was new. The engine wouldn't run below 1,000 rpm's. If the temperature went over 80° the engine would easily boil over. We put in a new Carter 4-barrel carburetor, an Edelbrock intake manifold, and Edelbrock cam shaft and lifters. We rebuilt the distributor and should have replaced the timing gears. I changed the rear axle from 3.02 to 1 down to 4.10 to 1. Engine now starts good, doesn't get hot, and pulls well. Went from 4 mpg to 10 mpg and gets up to 55 mph in 1/4 mile," says Eugene Beckey, Edinburg, Ill. about his 1980 Ford F250 Ranger XLT.

"I've had it for 12 months and it's never been in the shop. That's a record for me considering the way I use a pickup," says Billy Joe McKnight, Humboldt, Tenn., pleased with his 1984 Ford F250 diesel.

Tim Kolb, Thurmont, Md., bought a 1985 Ford 4-WD F250. "Runs smooth and the hydraulic clutch seems to be a good feature. I was disappointed to find out, however, that I couldn't get a 6-cyl. engine in my heavy-duty truck. It would have gotten better gas mileage. I also think it's a shame that a spare tire is not even standard on a new truck anymore."

"I've had front brake problems. I had to replace the truck's cheap brake caliper piston with a steel one at a cost of \$150 when the front brakes were rebuilt at 39,000 miles. My dad has an identical truck and had to make exactly the same repair. Also, the 300 cu. in. engine is too small for towing. My next truck will have at least a 351 engine. I also had to add extra leaf springs in back," says Wes Suddarth, Lebanon, Tenn., about his 1981 Ford F150 4-WD.

"It's the worst vehicle we have ever owned. We've replaced two carburetors and the transmission twice. It still runs bad and no one on the farm wants to drive it," says James Schiff, Harrington, Del., disappointed with his 1983 GMC.

Jim Hanses, Swallow, Alberta, owns a 1983 Datsun 4-WD Hustler. "Gas mileage is 33 mpg in 2-WD and 25 mpg in 4-WD. Starts well and doesn't use any oil. The only improvement I'd like to see is a double-walled box. I'm going to build a box liner to keep it from getting damaged."

Donald Hermanson, Bismarck, N.

Dak., has a 1984 GMC 4-WD diesel with crew cab. "It has a major performance problem. It's got a diesel engine and a 3-speed transmission and I pull a number of different trailers. When I got the pickup they said it would compare with my old 1981 W150 Dodge 6-cyl. However, it doesn't have nearly the power to pull up hills, and so on. For a price of over \$20,000, you'd think we'd get more power. I asked the dealer about putting a turbo charger on it and he said it would void the warranty."

Vernon Seger, Oelnichs, S. Dak., likes his 1984 Ford F-250 4-WD diesel. "Dealer service is very good. The rings did not seat but they took care of the problem on warranty. It starts good, pulls well, has lots of power, is economical and drives great."

"I have over 200,000 miles on the original engine without any overhaul and I'll continue to drive this pickup as long as it is legal and serviceable," says Loren D. Baugher, Galt, Mo., pleased with his 1968 Chevrolet C-20 3/4-ton. "I pull NH3 wagons, big bale trailers, and so on."

"I wish they'd change the gear ratio of the rear end, or add an overdrive, to improve fuel economy," says Brian Wirkler, Farmersburg, Iowa, otherwise pleased with his 1984 Ford 150 Ranger 4-wheel drive with automatic transmission.

Nick Stolte, Fennimore, Wis., likes his 1983 Chevrolet S-10 pickup with 6-cyl. engine. "We use it as a second car and for running to town for 1/2-ton loads of feed. Gets 22 mpg on short trips and 25 on long ones. There are only two things I'd change. The clutch cable occasionally climbs the pulley and the vehicle needs more ground clearance."

"This truck has two problems. The shift lever for the 4-WD doesn't always work when going into and out of 4-WD drive. Secondly, the differential gear ratio is too high for the power needed," says Vance Vosberg, Wyndmere, N. Dak., about his 1984 Ford F-150 4-WD.

"This truck has been a lemon," says David Siebels, Scotch Grove, Iowa. He owns a 1979 Chevrolet 3/4-ton 4-WD. "The paint chipped off the hood 6 months after I bought it new. The seat went bad 2 months later. It was replaced but the new seat went bad soon after. The 400 cu. in. engine hasn't performed well at all and it gets a terrible gas mileage. The engine uses a quart of oil every 20 miles and the intake manifold continually goes out. I'll never buy another full-sized Chevy pickup."

"This is the third Dodge pickup I've owned and they all seem to use about 4 qts. of oil every 2,000 miles but they don't seem to get any worse," says Alan Mues, Cambridge, Neb., pleased with his latest 1980 Dodge 150 with a 318 engine. "Gas mileage could be improved, body metal could be heavier, and the oil filter could be put in a more accessi-