

STARTED WITH 1977 FORD 3/4-TON 4-WD PICKUP

6-WD Pickup Built From 3/4-Ton Model

"A lot of people thought I was crazy to cut up a perfectly fine pickup, but I'm glad I did," says Dan Hampton of Ten Sleep, Wyo., who converted a 1977 Ford F-250 3/4-ton 4-WD pickup into a 6-WD pickup that's equipped with walking beam rear axles and a 12-ft. 3-in. long steel flatbed.

The flatbed is equipped with a headache rack with chain hooks for easy binding of loads and can be quickly converted into a box with 6-ft. high sides.

"It works great as an all-around ranch truck for hauling hay, machinery, and livestock. I often use it to pull a 23-ft. gooseneck trailer. I've hauled loads weighing up to 33,940 lbs. gross, including the weight of the trailer. This truck has 233,000 miles on it but it's still going strong."

Hampton cut off the pickup frame about 3 ft. behind the cab. He then welded on a 12-ft. long frame he took from an early 1970s crew cab pickup. He fitted the new frame with the original rear axle and the rear axle off a 1973 Ford 3/4-ton 4-WD pickup. He also mounted an extra transfer case 2 1/2 ft. behind the cab, positioned so it faces backward. A pair of driveshafts on the transfer case are used to power the mid and rear axles, with one driveshaft going to each axle. A carrier

bearing mounted next to the differential on the mid axle supports a single driveshaft that powers the rear axle.

A local machine shop worked on the frame modifications, walking beam suspension system, and driveline for the rear axles. It consists of a set of leaf springs off a 2-ton truck that are supported by a steel "hangar" bolted to a frame made from 2 by 4 rectangular steel tubing. The hangar connects the two axles together and also serves as the pivot point on the frame for both axles.

Hampton used 1 by 3-in. heavy channel irons and 2 by 4-in. heavy rectangular steel tubing to build a frame for the flatbed and bolted it to the pickup's frame. He used 1/8-inch deck plate to build the floor and 1 by 2 rectangular steel tubing to build stakes that support 20-in. high wooden sideboards. Steel racks slide into the tops of the stakes to make 6-ft. high sides.

The pickup is powered by a modified 460 cu. in. gas engine off a 1974 Ford LTD car. Hampton added 429 heads and 9:1 compression pistons to boost the power. He also removed the original 4-speed manual transmission and replaced it with a direct (no over-drive) Clark 5-speed transmission.

"It does everything a 1 1/2-ton truck can do, yet it doesn't look like a monster truck," says Hampton. "I spent about \$10,000 to build it, but it works better than a new 1-ton 4-WD pickup that would cost \$30,000 or more. The pickup itself weighs almost 9,000 lbs. because of the steel bed. I've hauled 20-ft. long, 12-in. dia. irrigation pipes on the bed.

"The pickup empty by itself gets about 10 mpg. Pulling a trailer it gets about 5 mpg.

"It's amazing what I can tow with this truck. One time I pulled a semi truck and pup trailer loaded with straw up a hill after the driver spun out on a snow-packed road. I had chains only on the front wheels. I also used it to pull out our Versatile 276 II bi-directional tractor when it got stuck in mud. It works better than a dually pickup on side hills, especially if the ground is muddy, because the rear wheels follow directly in tracks made by the front wheels instead of straddling them and slipping and sliding around.

"I added a shift lever inside the cab in order to engage or disengage the far rear axle, which allows me to put the pickup in 2-WD, 4-WD, or 6-WD. I use 2-WD on the highway, with only the mid axle driving, or switch to 4-WD with either the two rear axles driving or the front and mid axles driving. To switch to 6-WD I engage the far rear axle. I use 6-WD a lot in mud and snow.

"Because of the walking beam axles it rides a lot smoother on rough terrain than a conventional pickup. However, it does ride rough when it's empty. I had to remove the 2-ton truck's original overload springs because they made the pickup ride too rough. The suspension system is a miniature version of the Hendrickson walking beam system used on heavy duty trucks. It keeps the bed 3 to 4 in. lower than the bed on a conventional pickup, which makes it a lot easier to throw small square bales on it. There's 8 in. of clearance between the tires and bed, but when I go over an 8-in. high bump the axles raise only 4 in. which leaves room for tire chains.



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"The bed is equipped with a hide-away gooseneck hitch as well as a receiver hitch built in high enough to clear our rough terrain when it's not in use. The rear corners of the bed are angled forward to provide more

clearance when I turn with a trailer."

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"Ultimate Pickup" Pulls Like A Semi, Rides Like A Car

Sterling Trucks displayed this eye-catching "Ultimate Pickup" at a recent farm show in Regina, Saskatchewan.

"It pulls like a semi but rides like a car," says Aaron Bartoszewski of Sterling Trucks.

It's a 2 1/2-ton Crew Cab pickup that sits atop a low-profile chassis with a GCVW of 31,000-lbs. It's powered by a Caterpillar in-line 6-cyl. 215 hp diesel engine coupled to an Allison automatic transmission with an instrument panel-mounted shifter. It comes with air ride suspension and a wheel base that's almost 240 in. long. The special-built box is 10 1/2 ft. long.

"Only a handful of these special order pickups have been built so far. They sell for about \$80,000 and are aimed mainly at livestock haulers, RV owners, and rodeo people," says Bartoszewski. "It's really a beefed-up version of a 1-ton pickup. The engine has 550 ft. lbs. of torque. An Ontario company, Qualefics Body & Show, Inc., did much of the work on it. They added a chromed and polished diamond plate decor package and dually fenders and closed in the saddle tanks, storage box, and battery box with a custom designed "faring" that extends back to the dually fenders.



Pickup comes with a chromed and polished diamond plate decor package, dually fenders, and custom designed "faring" that extends from the front fenders to the dually fenders.

"The box contains an inverted fifth wheel king pin plate as well as a polished stainless steel toolbox. On back is a heavy duty 12 in. chrome-plated drop rear bumper with integrated hitch. The pickup also has polished diamond plate aluminum steps, deluxe fender skirts, front bumper guides with lights, and a "Lund" windshield visor."

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Vol. 22, No. 1, 1998

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FARM SHOW (ISSN #01634518) is published bimonthly (6 times a year) for \$15.95 per year (\$19.95 in Canada and foreign countries) by Farm Show Publishing, Inc., P.O. Box 1029, 20088 Kenwood Trail, Lakeville, Minn. 55044. Periodicals postage paid at Lakeville, Minn., and Shakopee, Minn. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to FARM SHOW, P.O. Box 1029, Lakeville, Minn. 55044 (ph 612 469-5572; fax 612 469-5575). E-Mail: Editor @ F A R M S H O W . c o m . Website: www.FARMSHOW.com. Single copy price is \$4.00 (\$4.50 in Canada). Publication No. 469490. GST No. 131272023.

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Jan.-Feb., 1998