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MOTOR TREND

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A TALE OF TWO ALLOYS

ALL-NEW
ALUMINUM F-150
VS. SILVERADO
VS. RAM 1500

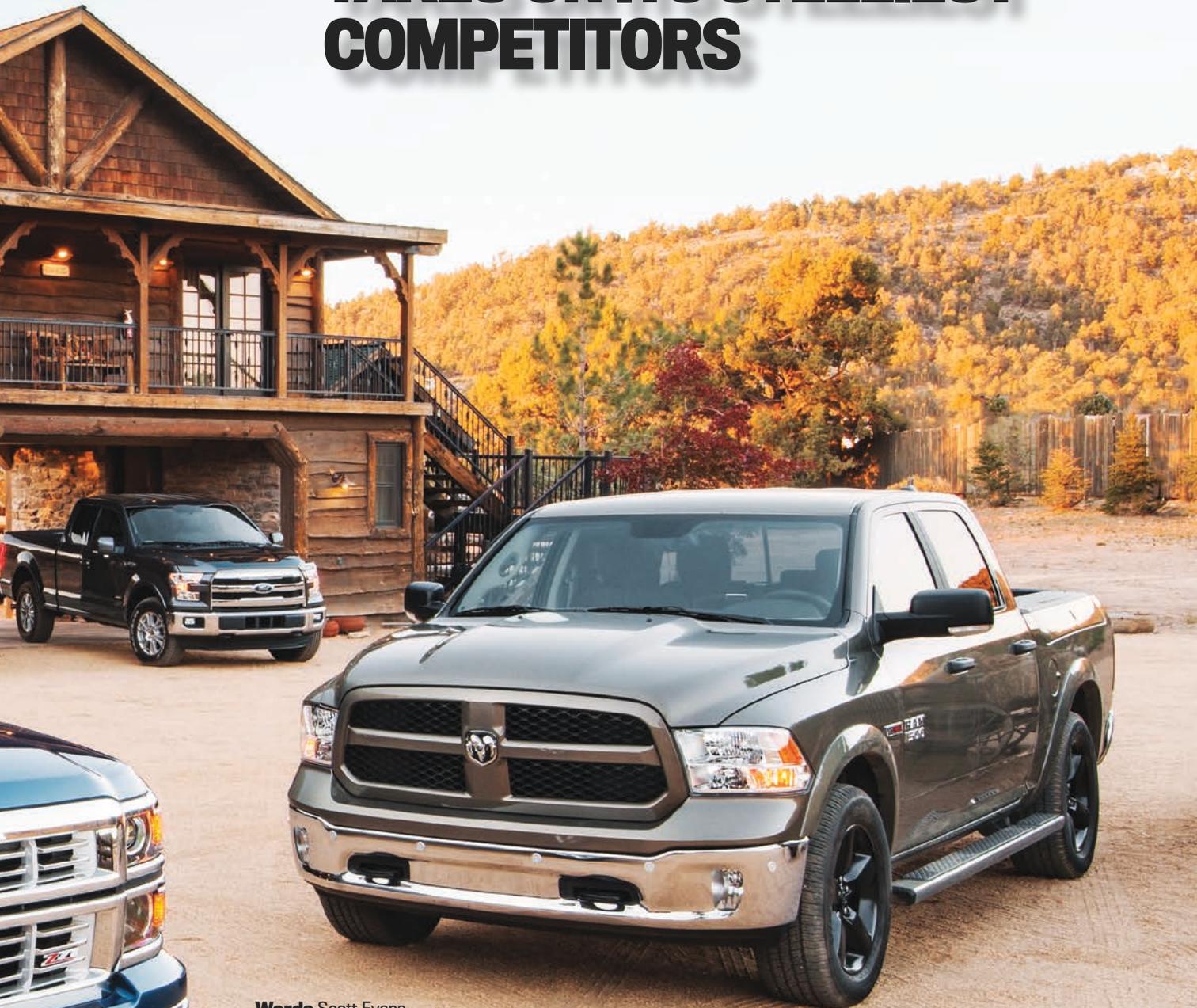
COMPARISON

**Ford F-150 Lariat 4x4 VS. RAM 1500 Outdoorsman EcoDiesel 4x4
VS. Chevrolet Silverado 1500 LTZ Z71**

*NOTE: U.S. Pricing, warranty and fuel economy numbers
are quoted throughout this article*



THE ALUMINUM F-150 TAKES ON ITS STEELIEST COMPETITORS



Words Scott Evans
Photography Jessica Walker



Pickup trucks are so ubiquitous, so common on our roadways that we tend to take them for granted, but the fact is America loves trucks. Combined, Chevrolet, Ford, and Ram sold 1.6 million of them last year, and sales are up. That's mind-boggling to some, but it illustrates just how important these vehicles are to the market, their builders, and their buyers.

It also illustrates why the three big players have each launched an all-new model within the past three years, each truck stuffed with significant updates based on volumes of customer research, and we've got their

strongest all-around models assembled for this test. From Chevrolet, the Silverado 1500 LTZ with a 5.3-liter EcoTec3 V-8. From Ford, the F-150 Lariat with a 2.7-liter twin-turbo EcoBoost V-6. From Ram, the 1500 Outdoorsman with a 3.0-liter turbocharged EcoDiesel V-6.

From the outset, you can see a small problem: The only F-150 with the 2.7-liter EcoBoost available for our test was this Lariat SuperCab, a mid-grade model roughly \$7,000 cheaper as tested than the nearly top-trim Ram and Silverado. Thankfully, we also had an F-150 3.5-liter EcoBoost Platinum SuperCrew at the office to compare features and interior space. Additionally, a comparably equipped F-150 would run about \$54,000, or you could

HEAVY WEIGHTS
Aluminum or not, the lightest truck in this group still weighs more than 4900 pounds (Ford). The heaviest? Ram at nearly 6000.

Location: Jackrabbit Ranch, Big Bear City, CA

COMPARISON | Full-Size Trucks

strip down the Ram or Silverado to meet the F-150's price with similar content.

Despite what truck advertising would have you think, customer research is consistent across the board. Most light-duty trucks, for example, drive around empty most of the time. With that in mind, we started with a drive around town and down the freeway with empty trucks.

As the test data at the end of the story show, the F-150 is a screamer. The 2.7-liter EcoBoost engine feels wildly more powerful than its official ratings suggest, so much so that our testing director got it and the 3.5-liter EcoBoost truck mixed up at the track. When we took it up to the mountains, the turbochargers made short work of the altitude, though the six-speed transmission tended to hunt among the upper gears as it went up and down hills and around tight corners. Beyond that, we were less impressed. The steering is the lightest of the three and rather vague. The F-150 rides well and is quiet inside, but the front end feels floaty on the freeway.



The biggest surprise was the disparity between the Silverado's test data and its real-world performance. On the test track, the Silverado was nearly as quick as the F-150. On the street, you'd never know. The objectively slower Ram felt quicker around town than the Silverado. The combination of incredibly lethargic throttle response and a transmission that seems to always be in sixth gear made the Silverado feel the slowest by a country mile unless you floored it. Up in the

mountains, these problems were only exaggerated. Otherwise, the Chevy is very quiet inside, the ride is soft and a bit floaty, and all the responses are a bit dull. The test numbers say it's the quickest around a corner, but you wouldn't know it from inside.

The Ram was also a surprise—but a good one. The EcoDiesel's torque comes on quickly and makes the truck feel quicker than it is. Part of that is thanks to its exclusive eight-speed automatic transmission, which we

BLOCK PARTY The giant, customizable display in the gauges is chock-full of features. The only console shifter in the group seemed like a waste of potential storage space.





Comparably equipped, these trucks are essentially all the same price: above \$53,000.



agreed was the best here by far. Up in the mountains, this winning team never noticed the altitude or the twisty road. It was always in the right gear with ample power. The Ram's class-exclusive, optional air suspension rode the best, and the truck felt confident and responsive in turns, though it could use a quicker steering rack.

Next up was hauling. Per the research, the typical light-duty truck owner hauls about 1,000 pounds on average, so we dropped

1,000 pounds in each truck and hit the road. The all-powerful Ford didn't seem to notice the weight at all when accelerating, and the Ram seemed only vaguely aware of the load. The Chevy felt like it was working harder, and every move required more throttle pedal than before. The Chevy also didn't ride any better or worse, but its floaty, under-controlled body motions were exaggerated slightly. The Ford's ride was less affected, though we noticed more of the bumps in the road. The Ram, for

THE LOOK Editors preferred the look, layout, and quality of the Ram's interior. Its entertainment and information system is the friendliest to use.



COMPARISON | Full-Size Trucks



its part, rode just as well and didn't sag in the rear at all, thanks to its load-leveling air suspension.

With flat land hauling impressions in the bag, we headed out to the Davis Dam grade. The combination of altitude, payload, and a continuous 6-percent grade allowed us to observe how the powertrains reacted to a worst-case scenario we called "the



frustration test." That is, trying to pass uphill while weighed down. Once again, the Ford felt unencumbered and skipped up the hill as if the weight wasn't there. The Chevy felt seriously heavy, and the spry-downshifting Ram felt quicker than its slowest-of-all results suggested.

Leaving the grade behind, we dumped our payload and scrounged up a trailer. While maximum trailering weight has become the same sort of ego-measuring contest as horsepower, the reality is that 60 percent of light-duty truck owners tow less than once a month. When they do, they tow 7,000-8,000 pounds on average, so we hitched up a 7,000-pound trailer and got to work.

First, we did a bit of acceleration testing to replicate those hairy freeway on-ramp moments. The Ford still felt and was the quickest. The Chevy felt the slowest and

most labored, but it was actually the second quickest; the Ram felt quicker than the Chevy even though it wasn't. To the Chevy's credit, though, its power delivery was the most linear. Both the Ford and Ram suffered from turbo lag off the line, the Ford especially so.

A bit of driving revealed more about each truck's towing characteristics. Neither the Ford nor the Ram seemed bothered by the trailer when cornering. The Chevy, though, rolled a bit in the curves. Both the Chevy and Ford suffered from a firmer, bouncier ride with the trailer hooked up, but the Ram's air suspension had it riding about the same as it does without a trailer. All three trucks felt confident and composed when braking hard with the trailer attached.

Reversing, the Chevy's high beltline made seeing out slightly harder than in the other two, and it felt like the largest truck here, so

MOBILE OFFICE The Chevy counts six USB ports, four 12V ports, an aux input, an SD card reader, a 110V outlet, and a 4G Wi-Fi hot spot.



COMPARISON



We have never seen a happy-looking truck owner after a \$130 fill-up.



backing up was a little challenging but easy enough. The Ford was easier to see out of and responded better, thanks in part to its power and quick steering, but its tall, skinny side mirrors kept losing the parking space. The Ram shone brightest with its ample outward visibility, abundant low RPM torque, and wide side mirrors that never lost the parking space.

Driving done, it was time to look at other aspects of the trucks. Getting into each bed was a wildly different experience. While Ford's tailgate step makes climbing into and out of the bed the easiest, it has some drawbacks. If the tailgate is up or blocked, you're out of luck. It also requires several steps to set up and stow. Chevy's Cornerstep bumper, by contrast, is a beautifully simple solution. The steps in the rear bumper ends sit only 0.5 inch higher than Ford's step but require no setup and work whether the tailgate is up, down, or blocked. Their only drawback is that they require more balance and dexterity to use. Ram has no step. The best it can do is lower itself 1.75 inches with its air suspension set to Entry/Exit height (which can be done

TIED DOWN All three trucks feature a tie-down system in the bed, and each is an exercise in frustration. The Ram's is the most adjustable, and the Ford's works fine if you know the trick.

with the keyfob), leaving it 11 inches higher than either the Ford or Chevy solutions.

Moving inside the trucks, we liked the aesthetics and materials of the Ram's interior the best. Its seats are the most comfortable and supportive, its Uconnect infotainment system is the most intuitive to use, it's got tons of storage space, and we like the rotary gear selector. The Chevy earned praise for its bank of USB ports, 12V power points, and 110V plug. We liked the Ford's massive, customizable display screen in the instrument cluster, but the only console shifter in the group ate up a lot of center console space, and what power and USB ports the Ford had were hidden down in a cubby we could barely get our fingers in.

Each of these trucks also carries a laundry list of available features to make your life easier. The Chevy's on-board 4G LTE wireless hot spot turns it into a mobile office, though

the Ram does offer a slower 3G hot spot. The Ram's lauded air suspension and super-handly Ram Box bed storage system were staff favorites. The Ford's 360-degree camera ought to be standard on all vehicles this size, and its enormous sunroof is impressive. In the end, the features were so diverse that we called it a draw.

Finally, we measured fuel economy. Some of you will no doubt say it doesn't matter, that trucks get bad fuel economy and buyers accept it. To that we respond that we have never seen truck owners looking happy after pumping \$130 of gas or diesel into their trucks.

Looming perhaps the largest in this category is the all-new F-150. Not only has Ford developed a tiny 2.7-liter twin-turbo V-6 designed to simultaneously provide V-8 power and V-6 fuel economy, but it's also made the truck's body and cab out of aluminum to significantly reduce weight. Unfortunately, it's Eco OR Boost, not both. If you drive like there's a Fabergé egg under the gas pedal, you'll get decent fuel economy, but dip into the power at all and you'll get V-8 fuel economy to match





3RD
CHEVROLET
SILVERADO
1500 LTZ Z71

The rolling office is a boon on the job site, but the truck feels outclassed everywhere else.

2ND
FORD F-150
LARIAT 4X4

An incredibly capable and well-thought-out truck, but the wonders of its aluminum failed to wow us.

1ST
RAM 1500
OUTDOORSMAN
ECODIESEL 4X4

Forget "jack-of-all-trades." This truck masters every one of them.

Only 5 percent of light-duty truck owners go off-road once or more per month.

your V-8 power. As of this writing, Ford had not announced EPA estimates for the new F-150, but we put it through our Real MPG testing and saw 17 mpg city, 22 mpg highway, and 19 mpg combined. We also did a far less scientific test while the trucks were loaded—divided the miles driven by the gallons pumped. In that test, the F-150 returned just under 17 mpg.

Recognizing that many truck buyers prefer V-8s regardless of power ratings, Chevy redesigned its V-8 and added a cylinder deactivation system that turns it into a 2.7-liter V-4 under light loads. It's a neat trick, but it's not as effective as Ford's solution. The Chevy is EPA-rated at 16 mpg city, 22 mpg highway, and 18 mpg combined. In our Real MPG testing,

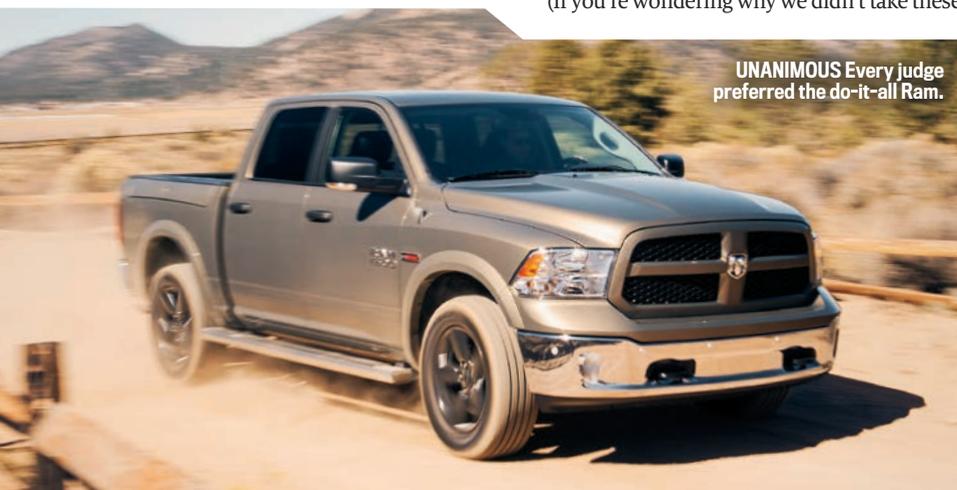
it returned a disappointing 13/19/15. In our payload fuel economy test, though, it came within striking distance of the Ford at just over 16 mpg observed.

Ram took its own gamble: a six-cylinder turbodiesel engine. The Ram EcoDiesel is EPA-rated at 19 mpg city, 27 mpg highway, and 22 mpg combined. In our Real MPG testing, it performed better than advertised, returning 20/28/23. Moreover, in our payload fuel economy test, it returned an observed 23 mpg. The Ram's combined Real MPG is 21 percent better than the F-150's, covering the current 18 percent national price premium of diesel, though paying off the EcoDiesel's \$4,000 option price would require time or a dramatic change in the fuel-price landscape. (If you're wondering why we didn't take these



trucks any farther off pavement than a lightly maintained dirt road, the answer is again in the data. Only 5 percent of light-duty truck owners take their trucks off-road once or more per month.)

After more than a week of driving and testing, it was inescapably clear how fiercely competitive this class is. All three are good trucks that will serve their deeply loyal customers well, but by the end, the Chevrolet Silverado is simply a step behind the Ford F-150 and Ram 1500 in every regard. The race was much tighter between the F-150 and the Ram, but in the end, questions about real-world fuel economy benefits and crash-repair costs of Ford's aluminum play weighed against it, while the Ram's combination of exclusive features, towing and hauling abilities, driving experience, and unimpeachable fuel economy put it on top. ■



UNANIMOUS Every judge preferred the do-it-all Ram.

VISIT **RAMFACTS.CA** FOR MORE DETAILS

COMPARISON



POWERTRAIN/CHASSIS	2015 Chevrolet Silverado 1500 LTZ 771	2015 Ford F-150 Lariat 4x4	2014 Ram 1500 Outdoorsman EcoDiesel 4x4
DRIVETRAIN LAYOUT	Front-engine, 4WD	Front-engine, 4WD	Front-engine, 4WD
ENGINE TYPE	90-deg V-8, aluminum block/heads	Twin-turbo 60-deg V-6, iron block/alum heads	Turbodiesel 60-deg V-6, iron block/alum heads
VALVETRAIN	OHV, 2 valves/cyl	DOHC, 4 valves/cyl	DOHC, 4 valves/cyl
DISPLACEMENT	325.1 cu in/5,328 cc	164.4 cu in/2,694 cc	182.3 cu in/2,988 cc
COMPRESSION RATIO	11.0:1	10.0:1	16.5:1
POWER (SAE NET)	355 hp @ 5,600 rpm*	325 hp @ 5,750 rpm	240 hp @ 3,600 rpm
TORQUE (SAE NET)	383 lb-ft @ 4,100 rpm*	375 lb-ft @ 3,000 rpm	420 lb-ft @ 2,000 rpm
REDLINE	5,800 rpm	5,750 rpm	4,500 rpm
WEIGHT TO POWER	15.8 lb/hp	15.2 lb/hp	25.0 lb/hp
TRANSMISSION	6-speed automatic	6-speed automatic	8-speed automatic
AXLE/FINAL-DRIVE RATIO	3.42:1/2.29:1	3.55:1/2.45:1	3.92:1/2.63:1
SUSPENSION, FRONT; REAR	Control arms, coil springs, anti-roll bar; live axle, leaf springs	Control arms, coil springs, anti-roll bar; live axle, leaf springs	Control arms, air springs, anti-roll bar; live axle, air springs, anti-roll bar
STEERING RATIO	16.3:1	17.0:1	19.1:1
TURNS LOCK-TO-LOCK	3.1	3.3	3.5
BRAKES, F;R	13.0-in vented disc; 13.6-in vented disc, ABS	13.8-in vented disc; 13.2-in vented disc, ABS	13.2-in vented disc; 13.8-in vented disc, ABS
WHEELS	9.0 x 20-in, cast aluminum	7.5 x 18-in, cast aluminum	8.0 x 20-in, cast aluminum
TIRES	275/55R20 111S M+S Goodyear Wrangler SR-A	275/65R18 116T M+S Goodyear Wrangler Fortitude HT	275/60R20 114S M+S Goodyear Wrangler SR-A



DIMENSIONS			
WHEELBASE	143.5 in	145.0 in	140.7 in
TRACK, F/R	68.7/67.6 in	67.6/67.6 in	68.6/68.0 in
LENGTH X WIDTH X HEIGHT	230.0 x 80.0 x 74.0 in	231.9 x 79.9 x 76.9 in	229.0 x 79.4 x 78.5 in
TURNING CIRCLE	47.2 ft	47.1 ft	39.8 ft
CURB WEIGHT (F/R DIST)	5,607 lb (58/42%)	4,935 lb (59/41%)	5,990 lb (57/43%)
SEATING CAPACITY	5	5	5
HEADROOM, F/R	42.8/40.5 in	40.8/40.3 in	41.0/39.9 in
LEGGROOM, F/R	45.3/40.9 in	43.9/33.5 in	41.0/40.3 in
SHOULDER ROOM, F/R	64.8/65.7 in	66.7/65.8 in	66.0/65.7 in
PICKUP BOX L X W X H	69.3 x 62.2 x 21.1 in	78.9 x 65.0 x 21.4 in (est)	67.4 x 66.4 x 20.0 in
CARGO VOLUME	53.4 cu ft	63.5 cu ft (est)	50.3 cu ft
WIDTH BET. WHEELHOUSES	51.0 in	50.6 in	51.0 in
PAYLOAD CAPACITY	1,593 lb	1,565 lb	1,320 lb
TOWING CAPACITY	9,400 lb	5,000 lb	8,700 lb



TEST DATA			
ACCELERATION TO MPH, UNLADEN; TOWING 7,000-LB TRAILER			
0-30	2.3; 5.7 sec	2.4; 5.0 sec	2.6; 5.2 sec
0-40	3.5; 8.9	3.5; 7.5	4.3; 9.0
0-50	5.2; 13.6	4.9; 11.5	6.3; 14.5
0-60	6.9; 19.5	6.5; 16.2	8.8; 23.9
0-70	9.4; -	8.6; 22.2	11.8; -
0-80	12.2; -	11.2; -	16.0; -
0-90	15.5; -	14.2; -	20.8; -
PASSING, 45-65 MPH	3.6; 15.5	3.2; 9.4	5.1; 21.2
QUARTER MILE	15.4 sec @ 89.8 mph; 22.0 sec @ 62.3 mph	15.1 sec @ 92.8 mph; 20.7 sec @ 68.0 mph	16.6 sec @ 81.5 mph; 22.2 sec @ 58.7 mph
DAVIS DAM "FRUSTRATION"***	7.6 sec, 665 ft	6.0 sec, 524 ft	9.0 sec, 812 ft
BRAKING, 60-0 MPH	127 ft	127 ft	126 ft
LATERAL ACCELERATION	0.77 g (avg)	0.75 g (avg)	0.76 g (avg)
MT FIGURE EIGHT	28.0 sec @ 0.75 g (avg)	28.5 sec @ 0.69 g (avg)	29.0 sec @ 0.56 g (avg)
TOP-GEAR REVS @ 60 MPH	1,500 rpm	1,600 rpm	1,700 rpm



CONSUMER INFO. NOTE: U.S. PRICING, WARRANTY AND FUEL ECONOMY NUMBERS ARE SHOWN BELOW			
BASE PRICE	\$43,755	\$43,305	\$46,155
PRICE AS TESTED	\$54,550	\$46,720	\$53,690
STABILITY/TRACTION CONTROL	Yes/yes	Yes/yes	Yes/yes
AIRBAGS	Dual front, front side, f/r curtain	Dual front, front side, f/r curtain	Dual front, front side, f/r curtain
BASIC WARRANTY	3 yrs/36,000 miles	3 yrs/36,000 miles	3 yrs/36,000 miles
POWERTRAIN WARRANTY	5 yrs/100,000 miles	5 yrs/60,000 miles	5 yrs/100,000 miles
ROADSIDE ASSISTANCE	5 yrs/100,000 miles	5 yrs/60,000 miles	5 yrs/100,000 miles
FUEL CAPACITY	26.0 gal	36.0 gal	26.0 gal
EPA CITY/HWY/COMB ECON	16/22/18 mpg	Not yet rated	19/27/22 mpg
ENERGY CONS., CITY/HWY	211/153 kW-hrs/100 miles	N/A	199/140 kW-hrs/100 miles
CO2 EMISSIONS, COMB	1.06 lb/mile	N/A	1.01 lb/mile
RECOMMENDED FUEL	Unleaded regular	Unleaded regular	Diesel
REAL MPG, CITY/HWY/COMB	13/19/15 mpg	17/22/19 mpg	20/28/23 mpg



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RAM 1500

With hard work. And smart work. The 2015 Ram EcoDiesel is more fuel efficient than F-150 EcoBoost.¹ Thanks in part to innovations like an 8-speed automatic transmission and an available class-exclusive Active-Level™ Four-Corner Air Suspension with aero mode.¹ The Active-Level™ Four-Corner Air Suspension automatically lowers the truck at highway speed, helping to maximize aerodynamics for enhanced handling and fuel efficiency. Just another reason why Ram has the highest customer loyalty of any full-size pickup.²



34 MPG HWY.
MORE FUEL EFFICIENT
THAN F-150
ECOBOOST*



**9,200 LB
TOWING³**



**420 LB-FT
TORQUE**



**EXCLUSIVE
ACTIVE-LEVEL
4-CORNER
AIR SUSPENSION⁴**



**LONGEST
LASTING
LINE OF TRUCKS
IN CANADA⁵**

GUTS · GLORY



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*Based on a comparison of 2015 EnerGuide highway fuel consumption ratings for 2015 Ram 1500 4x2 with 3.0 EcoDiesel V6 and 8-speed automatic (up to 34 MPG highway) and 2015 Ford F-150 4x2 EcoBoost V6 6-speed automatic (up to 31 MPG highway). ¹Based on 2014 Automotive News Full-Size Pickup segmentation. Optional feature available. ²Based on third-party Canadian competitive "trade-in" data for MY2008 to MY2013 new full-size pickups. ³When properly equipped. ⁴Based on longevity of entire Ram large pickup segment compared to all competitive large pickups on the road since 1988. Longevity based on IHS Automotive: Polk Canadian Vehicles In Operation data as of July 1, 2013, for model years 1988-2013 for all large pickups sold and available in Canada over the last 26 years.