

# Dodge feels it has the right place with the right product at the right time with the 2009 Ram pickup

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SANTA BARBARA, Ca.: Is Canada ready for a new, full-size pickup truck?

At the launch of the 2009 Dodge Ram, Chrysler Canada president, Reid Bigland, pointed out, that despite the rise in fuel costs, Canadians are still buying 22,000 new big pickups every month.

Dodge, like all manufactures, saw the fuel price surge coming, perhaps not so suddenly, and designed the next generation Ram to meet (they hope) a sea change in how we work and travel.

The 2009 Ram offers 13 per cent more power, nine per cent more torque and a fuel efficiency increase of four per cent. Dodge also lowered the price over the 2008 Ram by an average \$2,200 per model and then built in an average of \$2,500 in added features.

The 2009 Dodge Ram will be offered in regular cab, Quad Cab and Crew Cab (new to RAM this year) configurations, with three box lengths: eight-foot (regular cab), six-foot-four-inches (regular cab and Quad Cab) and a new-for-2009 box length of five-foot-seven-inches (Ram Crew 1500).

Dodge says they all fit inside a standard-sized garage. The Ram Crew 1500 offers a claimed first-in-segment cargo management system called the RamBox. It is weatherproof, lockable, illuminated and has drainable storage compartments integrated into both fender sides for quick access and convenience. Each box holds up to five cases (120 cans) of 12-ounce beverages. Total capacity is 7.4 cubic feet, slightly more than the capacity of a 55-gallon drum.

During the launch in California of the new Ram, part of the exercise was an off-road segment on a 3,200-acre ranch. Tinder dry, the soil was like sand with the consistency of talcum. Churning up and down hills, we spewed out huge clouds of the stuff. And the end of the drive, the first thing I checked was the Ram Box to see any of the sand got in. It was clean.

Another segment-first innovation on the Ram Crew Cab 1500 is a pair of "store-in-the-floor" storage bins with removable liners that offer even more versatile storage, large enough for ten, 12-ounce beverages and ice.

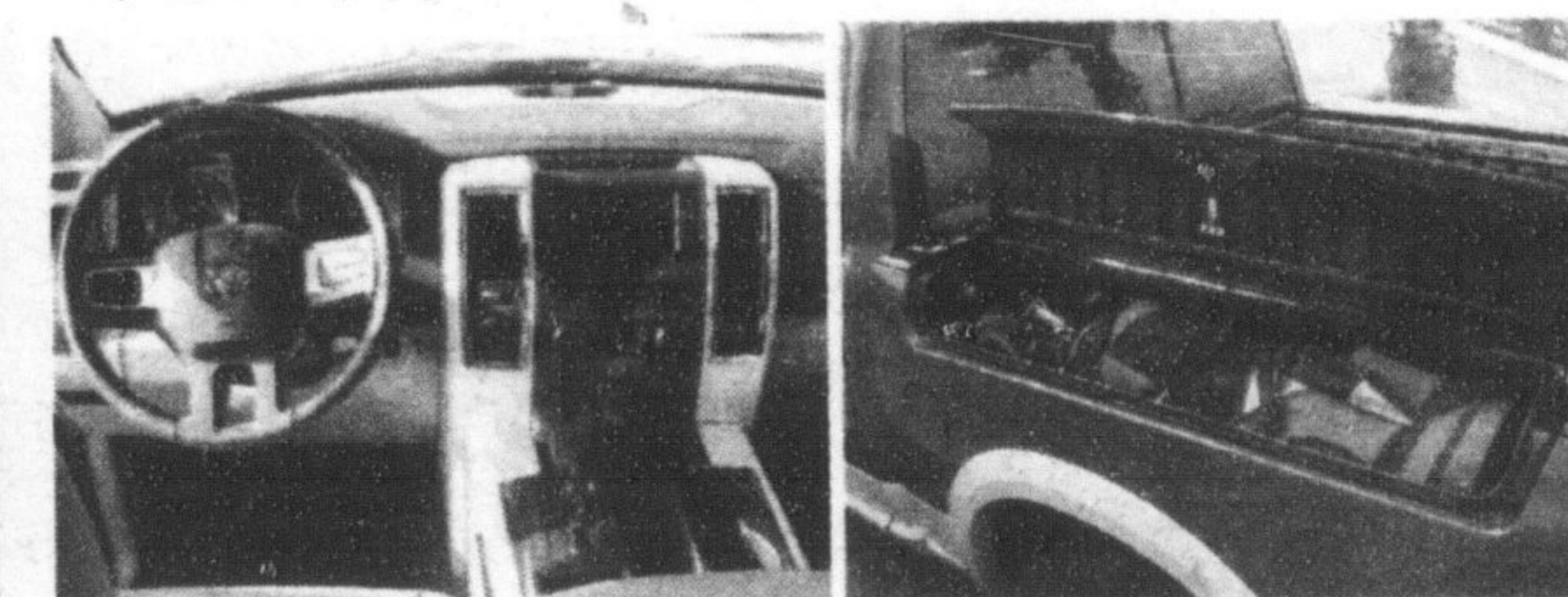
There are three engine choices starting with a new-generation 5.7-litre Hemi that produces a claimed best-in-class 390 hp and 407 lb/ft of torque. The middle engine is a 4.7-



ABOVE: With a striking new look, the 2009 Dodge Ram full-size pickup truck was reduced an average \$2,200 across the board compared to the 2008 model and then was given an average of \$2,500 in extra content.

BOTTOM LEFT: The interior of the 2009 Ram was totally redone and now features much higher grade materials as well as all the amenities like surround sound that includes speakers embedded in the headliner.

BOTTOM RIGHT: An innovation available on some models is the Ram Box that creates two lockable compartments in the unused bed walls. Each has a capacity of more than a 55-gallon drum. It can hold a full set of golf clubs and up to 120 cans of pop. It has a drain plug as well.



litre V8 making 310 and 330 lb/ft of torque. Last is a 3.7-litre V6 generating 215 hp and 235 lb/ft of torque. The powertrains came further mixed and matched with four- and five-speed automatic transmissions; part-time and on-demand four-wheel-drive transfer cases; and four different axle ratios.

When I asked how many ways the cabs, engines, transmissions, drives and axles ratios could be ordered (not including the four trim levels) I was told tens of thousands.

In 2010, Ram will add two Cummins diesel engines and a hybrid.

There are four trim levels offered: ST, SLT, Sport and Laramie. As you can imagine, there are also thousands of variations in pricing, but for just the rear-drive models they range from \$25,995-\$30,295 for the ST; SLT, \$38,395-\$34,190; Sport, \$31,895-\$37,690 and Laramie, \$40-695-\$42,190.

And they can be fast too. With the new Hemi, the Dodge Ram R/T (special trim level of the Sport) regular-cab 4x2 model with a short bed and 4:10 gears blasts from 0-60 mph in less about six seconds. That's better than many sports cars I've tested.

The chassis consists of an enhanced body-on-frame design using high-strength steel supports and an all-new, first-in-segment, solid axle, multi-link coil spring rear suspension that provides outstanding ride and handling characteristics without sacrificing payload (up to 1,850 pounds) and towing capability (up to 9,100 pounds).

Now I have come to think of five-link rear suspensions with independently sprung wheels. In the 2009 Ram, the set-up of the coil spring is perpendicular to the frame but the huge shock is set at a rearward angle set backwards from the frame and down to the axle and acts like a torque tube as well.

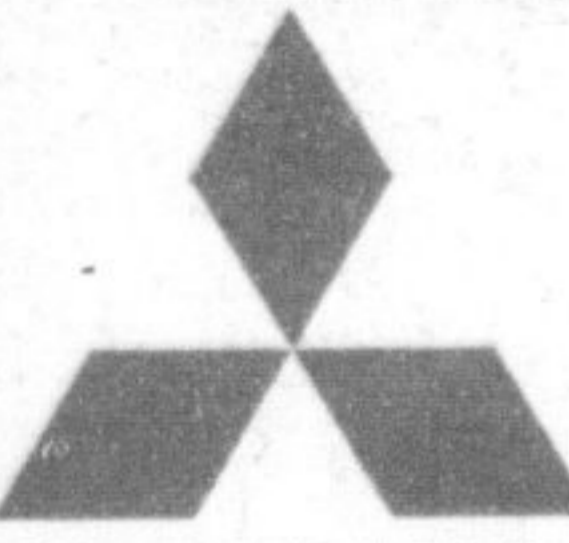
This truck is now so well mannered, that on a sideroad at 50 mph, we placed the right side wheels off on the shoulder. In Rams of old, we would have been in big trouble. The new Ram just soaked it up.

I rode half the way in the back seat of a Crew Cab because these things can be real kidney shakers for those travelling in the back. With legroom to spare, it was like riding in a limo.

When we did encounter washboard pavement, the Ram pitched and rocked but never lost adhesion, especially at the rear. And on the off-road (with dedicated tires) the grip in sand was truly good. Off-roaders will tell you that sand is what makes or breaks an off-road truck.

It's also one of the safest vehicles on the road, not to mention safest trucks, offering 35 active and passive safety features, including standard front and rear side-curtain air bags with Enhanced Accident Response System, knee bolsters, adjustable rear head restraints, remote keyless entry, seat belt pre-tensioners, Anti-lock Brake System, BeltAlert System,

• see DESIGNED on page C9



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