

WHAT'S UP

Please forward your agricultural events to daveb@fbcpublishing.com or call 204-944-5762.

June 28-29: Compost Matters in Manitoba, AAFC Brandon Research Station. Two-day workshop for "organics recycling and compost advocates." For more info call 1-877-571-4769 or email info@compost.org.

July 6-8: Canadian Seed Growers' Association annual general meeting, Sheraton Hamilton Hotel, 116 King St. W., Hamilton. For more info visit www.seedgrowers.ca/meetingsandevents or call 613-236-0497.

July 10-13: Canadian Special Crops Association silver jubilee convention, Westin Bayshore, Vancouver. For more info call 204-925-3780 or visit www.specialcrops.mb.ca.

July 13: Workshop: Kick-Start Your Food Product Idea, 9:30 a.m. to 3 p.m., Veterans Community Hall, 119-6th Ave. N., Swan River. Registration \$15. For more info or to register call MAFRI in Swan River at 204-734-3417.

July 15-17: Canadian Bison Association field days, Elk Island National Park, Fort Saskatchewan, Alta. For more info visit www.bisoncentre.com or call 780-955-1995.

July 20: University of Manitoba annual plant science crop research tour, Ian N. Morrison Research Farm, Carman. For more info call 204-474-8221.

FESTIVALS

Contact the us with your event, dates, location & contact information at news@fbcpublishing.com.

June 30-July 1: Glenboro Fair. Contact Geraldine Kovar at 204-827-2661.

June 30-July 2: Dauphin Agricultural Society 120th annual Fair, DMCC fairgrounds, Dauphin. Call 204-638-4428 or visit www.tourismdauphin.ca.

June 30-July 3: Dauphin's Countryfest. Visit <http://countryfest.ca>.

July 2-3: Great Western Harness Racing, Holland. Contact Joyce Elder at 204-526-2005.

July 2-3: Carberry Fair and Races. Contact Alex Christison at 204-834-3772 or email carberryagsociety@hotmail.com.

July 5: Rivers Fair. Contact Allison Hamm at 204-328-5304 or allisonjhamm@yahoo.com.

July 6-10: Winnipeg Folk Festival, Birds Hill Provincial Park. Visit www.winnipegfolkfestival.ca.

July 7-9: Carman Country Fair. Call 204-745-2226 or visit [www.carmanfair.ca](http://carmanfair.ca).

July 8-9: Crystal City (Clearwater) Fair. Contact Dean Buchanan at 204-873-2661 or deankb@mts.net.

July 8-10: Souris/Glenwood Fair. Contact Kim Stewart at 204-483-2968 or kimstew@mts.net.

July 8-10: Montmartre Folk Festival, Montmartre, Sask. Visit www.allfolkedup.ca.

July 9: Manitou Fair. Contact Brad McDonald at 204-242-2990 or bnmshopngo@hotmail.com.



LAURA RANCE

LITTLE ENGINE THAT CAN: Ford's new EcoBoost V6 engine seems perfectly capable of towing the distance — with good fuel economy too.

Can a truck be fuel efficient and still be a truck?

Truckin' around in a new Ford F150 EcoBoost

BY LAURA RANCE
Co-operator editor

There are lots of people around for whom that new truck smell is nothing remarkable.

After all, trucks are not only a fact of rural life, they are for many, a necessary all-purpose vehicle. You don't see many farmyards across this province that don't have at least one light-duty truck parked in the driveway.

Compare Manitoba Public Insurance statistics with population numbers and you find that nearly one-quarter of rural Manitobans are roaming around in a truck. That's compared to only nine per cent of the city slickers living inside the Perimeter.

Just do it

So when the time comes to replace your transportation, you head down to your favourite dealer and just do it, especially when you can write it off against the family business.

I'm not part of that crowd. For me, a truck is a luxury item, allowing my family to pursue our passion for equine sports. Getting a "new" truck in 2007 meant replacing my 1983 Chevy half-ton with a 1995 Dodge Ram 2500 V10 4x4.

Even so, we took palpable pleasure in upgrading to a 12-year-old truck over one of antique vintage. Wow, power windows. Heat — woohoo! Whoops, no brakes. You get my drift.

So when the opportunity arose for me to drive a 2011 Ford F150 4x4 equipped with the newly launched EcoBoost V6 engine and all the bells and whistles for a few days, I have to say I was intrigued — from a purely journalistic perspective, of course.

Ford has realized — and I'm sure the rest of the manufacturers aren't far behind — that

life has changed for country folks, arguably their most reliable demographic.

Times have changed

Back in the days when gas was cheap and distances were shorter, fuel economy ranked relatively low on the scale of priorities for truck shoppers. Far more important was whether it could haul that load of steers to the auction mart, buck the snowdrifts, and whether it was roomy enough to carry kids and their assorted hockey gear.

But trucks that once went a few miles to town for the mail, or to stop by the elevator to pick up another jug of herbicide are now making 20-, 30- and even 50-mile round trips to town, in addition to all their other towing, pulling, and assorted duties around the farm. Heck, running supper out to the Back 40 these days could take you into the next township.

Fuel economy is a much bigger concern — even when you're using purple gas.

Now I realize entering a discussion about fuel-efficient transportation when you habitually load the epitome of fuel efficiency — a horse — onto a trailer and haul it someplace else so you can ride around in little circles seems a bit contradictory. But you keep quiet about that, and I'll spare you my rant on snowmobiles.

So far, the truck manufacturers' answer to this combined challenge of towing torque and fuel economy has been the diesel engine.

Gas guzzlers

Generally speaking, they are a genuine improvement over the gas guzzlers. My father will tell anyone who will listen there was never a better engine made than the Dodge Cummins diesel. But they are expensive to buy, costly to maintain and they tend to be a bit sluggish. As some would say, you have to write ahead to pass.

Anecdotal reports from fellow truckers on the horse-show

circuit suggest my old Dodge V10 gas engine, which gets a whopping nine miles per gallon when towing a trailer — 10 if you're going downhill with the wind behind you. Stacks up pretty well against some of the other engines out there, diesel or otherwise. It's no shirker in the pulling department either.

Now Ford has introduced its EcoBoost technology, a gas engine that boasts both power and economy.

"Truck customers should think of the EcoBoost truck engine as a gas-powered engine with diesel-type capability and characteristics," said Jim Mazuchowski, Ford's V6 engines program manager. "The twin turbochargers and direct injection give it the broad, flat torque curve that makes towing with a diesel so effortless — and hard acceleration so much fun."

Fuel economy

Ford says this patented engine delivers fuel-economy gains of up to 20 per cent and a reduction of CO2 emissions of up to 15 per cent compared to larger, less-efficient engines. According to Ford, it has more than enough juice to tow a fully loaded three-horse trailer or a 30-foot boat.

It also ranks higher in its towing capacity than the 5.3L to 5.7L V8's made by its competitors in the light duty truck market.

The fuel economy for the 3.5 litre V6 4x2 model is rated at 22 miles per gallon on the highway and 16 in the city combined with 365 horsepower, torque of 420 pounds, a maximum towing capacity of 11,300 pounds and a maximum payload of 3,060 pounds.

I was curious to check out this fuel economy claim for myself. So I burned up a tank of fuel over the course of a weekend on straight highway driving with no trailer attached.

They lied. Instead of 22 mpg, I was getting 23 mpg and sneaking close to 24 mpg, provided I behaved myself and set the

cruise control at just under the speed limit. And I was driving the 4x4 model.

Accelerate

I had some assistance in this test drive from a male co-pilot, who insisted we needed to check out its acceleration capacity, because, you know, on busy two-lane highways like we have in rural Manitoba, you can't waste time when passing other vehicles.

This truck passed that test with flying colours.

But how does it tow?

The week-long test drive coincided with a scheduled trip to the vet for one of my horses. Backing up to hook up the trailer was a breeze with the rearview assist screen. It must be noted, however, that I manage just fine with my other truck, and that's with a slide-in camper blocking my view. I could see those skills dissipating rapidly with this kind of technology at my disposal.

Pulling onto the highway I had the sense that I was in a little truck towing a big load. But to be fair, I'm accustomed to a three-quarter ton.

This little engine picked up highway speed with no complaints. The fuel consumption increased, but still came in at a respectable 13 mpg.

For the record, it looks pretty sharp, too. Parking a decked-out \$65,000 truck in my driveway for a few days had the neighbours speculating that I'd either experienced a change in my social status — or my social life.

Ford might be onto something here. I could see this vehicle having appeal in the traditional light-duty truck market, whether it is with farmers or recreational haulers.

My advice to Ford would be to buy lots of advertising, especially in farm newspapers. But maybe wait until next year. I have a hunch the best target for marketing new trucks this year will be to people who have boats.

laura@fbcpublishing