

Installing a Steering Box

I just had a new steering box put in my 79' Li'l Red. The old one was leaking pretty good. I had no worries about rusting around it.

My thought was to see if there was a "better" steering box out there. I looked at the LMC catalog because they had one with a shorter # of turns lock to lock. 3 1/4 Vs the stock 4 1/2,

Sometimes I felt like I was turning a Farmall H and needed a neckers knob in tight spaces. Wouldn't you know it, LMC's newer catalogs no longer show it for 79's, only 72-77. There is a question as to the # of splines on the box input shaft. Old ones had 26, newer 31 1/2. Having a May '79 build date who knows? To count the splines it was either pull the box or loosen up the column and pull it back. Yuck! I didn't.

In searching I found Red Head Steering Gears in Auburn, WA 980001. 800 808 1148. They said they had a bolt in, #2854. Their info says it fits a '77-79. It would have 3 to 3 1/2 turns lock to lock. The box is supposed to be remachined, add needle bearings and oversize ball bearings, ect, ect. There is a 12 month warranty. It was 26 spline. I was promised it would fit.

It arrived two weeks ago and went in last week. No problem on the fit. I also got new tires at the same time and an alignment. \$\$\$

Results-

Very good. The truck turns a lot quicker like the rest of my family vehicles. Even better there is steering feedback and resistance. No more disconnect between the steering wheel and road. I didn't realize how nice that was until I got it. Remember though, this is the old ball steering gear. It is not a rack & pinion. But it still is a lot better.

Other points-

Be sure you have a power steering brace installed. Dodge trucks are known to flex the frame where the steering box bolts to it. To a point where the frame fails. Every Li'l Red should have one. You and family/friends are too important.

A shorter turning box will stress it more. The P/ N is 4447405 from Dodge Connection. On their website John Roberts describes the installation. The top of the Redhead steering box has the cap painted red. When the frame to fender seal is reinstalled, or installed new, the cap is covered and it looks stock.

The net cost was \$346.00 after returning the core. Not cheap. Between the mechanical upgrades, made in USA, turning ratio and road feel, the results are worth it.

Since the install I now need a high pressure power steering hose. but that's another story.

Dave Sperry