

The last Word About Fluid Leaks.

A Model A Ford should not leak fluids, maybe a drop or two but not leave a puddle every time it is parked. When our Model A's left the factory, there was not a trail of oil or water behind. Over the past three months we discussed engine oil leaks, water leaking from the cooling system and gas leaking from the fuel system. We talked about what may be causing the leaks and possible solutions. Now that we have all of these leaks repaired, we can then move onto three other components that are prone to leaking fluids.

First, let us consider the steering gear. It is not uncommon for the steering gear to leak oil around the horn rod and into the head light switch assembly. This not only makes a mess but often the headlight switch will not work because the switch contacts are all coated with oil.

Originally, there was a cork seal that fitted around the horn rod and prevented oil from leaking from the steering gear and into the switch but eventually, the cork would fail and the oil would leak into the switch housing. Ford continued the same head light switch design well into the late thirties but designed a tube that fit around the horn rod that prevented oil from leaking into the head light switch. Tube assemblies that will replace the original cork seal for both the early seven tooth and the later two tooth steering gears are available from most parts suppliers.



Another place the steering gear may be leaking is around the sector shaft. O rings and seals are available that may help this situation. If the sector bushings are tight and the proper 600W oil is used, most steering gears will not leak. For the steering gears that do leak, you may try using a semi fluid grease such as Penrite 1500W. This semi fluid grease will still flow and allow adequate lubrication of the internal components but will not drip or leak.



The second component that may be leaking oil is the transmission. If there is evidence of oil leaking from the drain hole in the bottom of the flywheel housing it may be transmission oil. This is often caused by oil leaking around the shift rails and into the bell housing. To correct this, Mitchell Manufacturing makes a seal kit that seals the shifter rail clearance holes in the bell housing. This kit can be installed when the engine and transmission are in place in the car but it is much easier to install when the bell housing is not attached to the engine.



Another common place for the transmission to leak is around the cluster and reverse idler shaft holes in the rear of the transmission case. There is a kit available to cover and seal this area. This is not difficult to install, just be sure to carefully follow the instructions.



The last component that can cause a problem with leaking oil is the rear end assembly. The most common problem area is oil leaking where the axle housings bolt to the center housing. This is a difficult area to repair as often it requires disassembling the rear axle assembly and replacing the gaskets. Sometimes a leak may be stopped by just tightening all the bolts but if the leak is severe, it may require major work to correct.

So put your coveralls on and get under your Model A. With a little effort and a few parts, often a lot of fluid leaks in your Model A can be repaired. You will have a cleaner garage floor and you will not have to hear about your Model A leaving a puddle every place it is parked.

Tech Tip

It is not advised to use chassis grease in the steering gear of a Model A. This thick grease will "channel" and move away from the components as the steering gear is used and will not flow back and keep everything well lubricated. Use 600W oil or a semi fluid grease.