



'Tis the Season for Deer Strikes

October 2021

It is deer season, and now is a good time to remind you of the dangers of animals on the roadway. The Insurance Institute for Highway Safety estimates, as a result of the booming deer population, 1.5 million deer-related accidents occur each year. Deer are struck in three out of four accidents involving animals. Nationally, collisions between deer and vehicles cause around \$1 billion in vehicle damage, kill 150 people and injure another 29,000 people every year.

Accidents with deer are more likely to occur on rural roads with a speed limit of 55 mph or higher, in darkness, or at dusk and dawn. In 60% of the accidents involving human fatalities with animal-vehicle collisions, the fatality was caused not by the collision with the deer, but failure to wear a safety belt. The animal-vehicle collision is the first event and often not the deadliest. It is what occurs to the vehicle after the initial collision that is often the cause of the fatality, i.e., striking a fixed object or other vehicles.

Crashes with deer are most likely to occur in late fall during deer breeding, migration and hunting season – from mid-October to mid-December – when deer are more active.

Don't count on deer whistles or deer fences to deter deer from crossing roads in front of you. Stay alert. There is no feasible way to keep deer and other animals off of the roadway. As a result, you need to be vigilant at all times and especially in those areas that are prone to animal crossings. The following are some tips to stay safe this fall:

- Constantly scan the road ahead and watch for the reflection of deer eyes and for deer silhouettes on the shoulder of the road. If anything looks slightly suspicious, slow down.
- Slow down in areas known to have a large deer population; where deer-crossing signs are posted; places where deer commonly cross roads; areas where roads divide agricultural fields from forestland; and whenever in forested areas between dusk and dawn.
- Deer are unpredictable. Sometimes they stop in the middle of the road. Sometimes they cross and quickly re-cross back from where they came. Sometimes they move toward an approaching vehicle. Assume nothing.
- Don't swerve to avoid striking a deer, as it increases the risk of hitting another vehicle or losing control of your vehicle.
- Do not assume trouble has passed completely when a deer successfully crosses the road. Deer frequently travel in groups and the presence of one likely indicates more.
- If there is no opposing traffic, use high beams at night to better illuminate deer.
- If a deer remains on the highway after you strike it, report the incident to the game commission or a local law enforcement agency, as the deer poses a danger to other motorists. If the deer might still be alive, don't go near it because a wild animal with sharp hooves can inflict injuries.

Be extra cautious this time of the year, take your time, slow down, be alert and buckle up.