

Wildlife Collisions

Minimize and Avoid

Statistics

Alberta

Collisions involving wildlife and domestic animals have nearly doubled in the past 10 years, from 5,997 cases in 1991 to 11,412 in 2001. There are an average 4.5 fatalities and 301 injuries annually.

North America

- 750,000 deer-vehicle collisions annually
- \$1.2 billion in property damage annually
- 120 fatalities/yr



Danger Areas for Deer Collisions

While deer collisions can happen virtually anywhere, even right in the middle of major metropolitan centers, there are places and times where we need to be especially vigilant:

- Watch for deer crossing signs as these usually indicate traditional migration routes
- Dusk and Dawn are the most dangerous times for deer collisions
- During hunting season, deer collisions rise significantly, in fact the single highest deer collision day is the opening day of hunting season. Insurance records indicate that 5 times more deer collisions occur on this day than on any other.
- Deer are herd creatures so if you see one deer, watch of others.
- Be extremely vigilant where dense woods encroach close to the roadway

Wildlife Research Strategies

- Wildlife Underpasses (22) and Overpasses (2)
- 2.4 Metre High Fencing
- "Drivers for Wildlife" Program
- Infrared Camera and Computer System
- Saskatoon-based International Road Dynamics has developed the Wildlife Warning System that scares animals away from highways with lights and horns
- Diversionary Feeding Areas
- Expanded hunting seasons
- Roadside Reflectors
- In-Vehicle Technologies
- Animal Guards
- Road Salt Alternatives
- Deer and Animal Wind and Electronic Warning Whistles – Not Generally Effective



Here is the question of the day:

Is it really about the wildlife?

What about other factors? Were you speeding? Not paying attention? Overdriving your headlights? There are many wildlife collisions where the wildlife is only one factor and not the primary factor

Wildlife Avoidance Strategies

While there are no 100% effective wildlife collision avoidance strategies, we can employ numerous defenses:

- Reduce speed and increase vigilance in deer country – **this is a must!**
- **Stay mentally alert in deer country – if you do not remember the last few miles it is time for a break!**
- Extend your visual lead time, keep your eyes focused on the top 2/3s of your windshield and use good visual scanning patterns
- During dusk and dawn scan the tree line for horizontal shadows that intercept the vertical tree shadows
- Watch for deer eye shine, but remember that moose do not have eye shine
- If you see a deer, SLOW DOWN until you are safely by the animal, but expect that other deer will appear
- If a deer appears in front of you, brake hard but do not swerve, you are better to hit the deer than lose control and roll over in the ditch
- If a deer appears in your headlights and then runs towards you, flash your high beams and honk your horn in short bursts. In this scenario deer are actually running from the shadow created behind them from your headlights, they perceive the shadow as a predator
- Deer whistles are less than 30% effective – do not depend on them
- Wear your seatbelt, most injuries from deer collision occur to people not wearing them
- For larger Animals such as Moose it is probably better to swerve than hit



What if a Crash is Inevitable?

In certain conditions, there is no real choice except to strike the animal.

If it appears impossible to avoid the animal:

- Aim for the spot the animal is coming from, not where it is going.
- Look where you want to go, not at the animal. You tend to go where you look - if you are looking at the animal that is where the vehicle tends to go.
- If you must hit something, try for a glancing blow rather than a head-on hit.
- Brake firmly and quickly, then look, and steer your vehicle to strike the animal at an angle.
- Let up on the brake just before you hit the animal. This causes the front end of your vehicle to rise and reduces the chances of the animal coming through your windshield.

How Deer Deterrents Stack Up

Techniques with generally positive results

Exclusionary fencing

Wildlife crossings

Techniques with conflicting results

Deer whistles

Roadside reflectors/mirrors

Techniques used, but rarely studied

Speed limit reductions

Deer crossing signs and technology

Hunting and herd reduction

Roadside vegetation management

Techniques used and not studied

In-vehicle technology

Salt de-icing alternatives

Public information/education campaigns

Techniques not generally used and rarely studied

Roadway lighting

Deer-flagging models

Intercept feeding

Roadway repellents

Fleet Safety International
3412 – 3rd Ave NW
Calgary, Alberta T2N 0M2
Telephone (403) 270-4034
www.fleetsafetyinternational.com