



MAFES Dawg Tracks

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Animals in the Road



Statistics aren't clear for the number of accidents occurring each year involving deer and motor vehicles. According to the Insurance Information Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS), there is an estimate of 1.5 million animal-vehicle collisions each year causing \$1 billion dollars in damage.

The study also revealed that approximately 150 die and another 10,000 are injured annually in such crashes. Individual monetary damages run anywhere from \$2,500 to \$10,000 for property losses and/or other damages. The National Safety Council (NSC) has figures that closely parallel the statistics of the IIHS and additionally stated that these collisions kill as many as 350,000 deer.

The deer-vehicle collisions are happening more frequently in most areas of the U.S. because the deer population is increasing and the number of vehicle miles driven is also increasing. Other reasons are a percentage of citizens are leaving the city and moving to rural areas where the deer populations are prevalent.

Highway safety professionals suggest that the best way to avoid a collision is with pure vigilance. During daylight hours, the alert motorist can usually see an animal on the side of the road itself and normally will be able to avoid a collision. In the dark hours, the situation is usually different. It is harder to see or spot an animal on the road or on the side of the road until it is too close to avoid it. For this reason and the fact that animals are more active during the evening and early morning hours 90 percent of deer-vehicle collisions happen between dusk and dawn.

Highway agencies are trying several different approaches to try to reduce the number of these accidents.

These attempts are as follows:

- ✓ **Signs** – These signs serve as a warning to motorists of the heavily populated areas of deer, moose, elk, and even geese in some parts of the country.
- ✓ **Fences and underpasses** – These are some help to the motorists and helps to preserve the deer population, but the cost of construction is usually unjustifiable. The other fact with fences is that the deer can jump over them and also when they realize that the fences obstruct their freedom, they look for alternate routes to cross. Underpasses will work to a point, but are very expensive to build and maintain.
- ✓ **Diversionsary feeding areas** – Deer tend to move about more in the fall and spring. Officers have set up feeding sights away from the roadways, but again these areas are quite expensive to operate and maintain.
- ✓ **Expanded hunting seasons** – This will help to an extent, but I have heard many game officials make the statement that hunters, who hunt by the regulations, do not affect the population as much as predators and disease.
- ✓ **Roadside Reflectors** – The reflectors, when used, can be positioned on the roadsides so that when the lights reflect on the deer, they tend to “freeze.” There are different schools of thought on just how effective they are.
- ✓ **Whistles** – There are folks who have purchased the vehicle mounted whistles in our section of the country, and probably more have done so in the West, to combat collisions from moose and elk as well as deer.

PREVENT A COLLISION-

- Be aware of your surroundings. Pay attention to deer crossings, especially in areas where woods and water are present.
- If a collision seems evident, don't swerve to avoid the animal. You may be increasing your risk of an accident.
- Always obey the traffic laws and keep your seat belt hitched.

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