



MISSISSIPPI STATE UNIVERSITY™
MS AGRICULTURAL AND FORESTRY
EXPERIMENT STATION

MAFES DAWG TRACKS

Cold weather is here ... and that means deer season! But the bad part is, not only is it the season for hunting deer, it's also the season for hitting deer. More than likely you have hit a deer with your vehicle or at least had a near-miss. It's not uncommon to ride down a country road, and even major highways, seeing several deer grazing along the right of way with their eyes reflecting in your headlights. Hopefully, they will just ignore you and keep on eating; if not, you could find yourself in a collision causing, not only expensive vehicle damage, but injury to yourself.

Mississippi lands a spot in the top 10 states where you are most likely to hit a deer, according to a claims analysis by State Farm. The MSU Extension Service estimates there are 1.75 million whitetail deer in Mississippi, which is higher on a deer-per-unit-area basis (density) than any other state, and only Texas has a greater number of deer. While this is great for having long deer hunting seasons, it also means a high chance of having a vehicle collision with one of these deer.

The increase in vehicle-deer crashes in the fall and winter months is partially a result of higher traffic volumes, higher vehicle speed and shorter daylight hours, coupled with the fact deer move around a lot more during the fall. Insurance claims for deer collisions increase dramatically from October through November each year. About 20 percent of crashes occur in early morning, while more than half occur between 5 p.m. and midnight.

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In the past few decades little, plastic whistles that attach to a vehicle's front bumper became popular. While there is no scientific evidence that supports these whistles working, some people swear them and others of us really doubt their affect. There may be no real way to keep deer and other animals off the road, but defensive driving along with these safety tips can help prevent collisions.

- ✓ **Stay alert.** Pay attention to "deer crossing" and "wildlife crossing" signs and be cautious in areas near woods or water.
- ✓ **Use high beams.** Flicking your high beams on an animal in the road may cause the animal to scurry away. High beams also help illuminate dark roads.
- ✓ **Don't swerve.** If a car crash is inevitable, maintain control of your vehicle and don't veer off the road. Swerving can cause drivers to lose control, causing an even more serious accident with another vehicle.
- ✓ **Brake as necessary.** Maybe you can avoid hitting the animal by reducing speed, honking your horn, and tapping your brakes to warn other drivers. If there are no drivers behind you, brake hard.
- ✓ **Remember meal time.** Watch for animals in the road between dusk and dawn.
- ✓ **Watch for other deer following behind the first one.** If you see one deer, there are probably more nearby.

Sources:

<http://extension.msstate.edu/natural-resources/wildlife/white-tailed-deer>

<https://www.statefarm.com/simple-insights/auto-and-vehicles/how-likely-are-you-to-have-an-animal-collision>