

Avoiding Accidents With Wildlife

Most deer-vehicle accidents (DVAs) occur during the months of October, November and December. Another peak occurs in May and June as one-year old deer are dispersing to new areas. However, DVAs can happen at any time of year. Deer are crepuscular, meaning that they are active at dawn and dusk. Thus, it is not surprising that most accidents involving deer happen between the hours of 5 to 10 p.m. and 5 to 8 a.m. While not all deer-vehicle collisions can be prevented, there are steps that drivers can take to avoid an accident.

10 Tips to Help Keep You Safe

- The single best way to avoid an accident is to be aware of the surroundings. Pay attention to deer crossing signs, and scan the roadsides for the “eyeshine” of deer (reflection of headlights in the deer’s eyes).
- At night, use high-beam lights when appropriate. This may allow the deer to be seen a few seconds earlier, giving the driver enough time to avoid an accident.
- Deer often use woodlots, fencerows, field edges or areas near water. Extra caution is needed when these habitats are close to roadways.
- Slow down around curves in areas where deer are known to occur.
- Slow down and prepare to stop if a deer is along the side of the road. There are likely more deer nearby. Deer will often follow one another single file across a road. Trying to cross through the middle of such a group often results in deer colliding with the side of the vehicle.
- Be prepared for the unexpected. Deer may stop in the middle of the road or decide to double back to the side of the road. Hard pavement such as concrete or asphalt provides poor traction for the hard and sharp hooves of deer. They may even fall down.
- If there are deer near the road, and there are no vehicles close behind, slow down, honk the vehicle’s horn in short bursts and flash the headlights.
- If deer are near the road, tap the brakes or use the emergency flashers to alert other drivers. Prepare to safely stop if the deer move toward the roadway.
- If there are deer on or approaching the road, do not slam on the brakes or swerve sharply to avoid the deer. It is instinctual to do this, but doing so may cause a loss of control of the vehicle and a more severe accident.
- Never tailgate! Always leave plenty of room between vehicles. Many severe deer vehicle accidents are caused when another vehicle becomes involved.