Driving Safely Where Deer Are Present Meeting Kit



Driving Safely Where Deer Are Present Safety Talk

Many accidents occur during the breeding season, also called “the rut”. This season usually lasts from late October to as long as early January in most of the United States with late October to end of November being the peak.

During this time, deer are more active and on the move. Outside of direct collisions with deer, other accidents occur due to vehicles swerving to miss a deer.

Deer have overpopulated the country and that means there are more of them than ever. Deer move around a lot and when their habitats are disturbed or when roads are constructed in them, they tend to ignore danger and follow their instinct to travel as needed for food, safety, and mates.

HAZARDS/DANGERS

Deer-vehicle collisions are common, to the tune of 1.6 million accidents per year according to the Insurance Information Institute. But it’s not just an inconvenience. Deer accidents lead to hundreds of deaths, tens of thousands of injuries and billions of dollars in vehicle damage each year. And as you venture out each and every day, you never know when you’ll be affected by a deer-car accident. Statistics tells us that, sure, the likelihood of hitting a deer is actually pretty low. But at night and during the fall mating season as days become shorter and deer venture out earlier, accidents spike, which can do more than just ruin your day.

WAYS TO STOP WILDLIFE ACCIDENTS

Drive Defensively During Peak Deer Hours. If you’re driving between the hours of 6pm and 9pm, especially in wooded areas or close to where deer live, mate or travel, please slow down. At higher speeds, our reaction times are limited, and reduced visibility at dusk further exacerbates the likelihood of hitting a deer.

Be Extra Careful When Driving Through a Protected Deer Crossing Zone. Posted signs usually indicate prior accidents, close calls and sightings, so you should be extra vigilant when traveling on these roads, particularly at dawn or dusk or in the fall when mating season picks up.

Be Aware that Deer Tend to Run in Packs. This means that if you see one deer running

by the side of the road, there’s likely one or more around that you don’t see! If there’s a deer anywhere on the road near you, you should likely stop or slow—they may have friends nearby who you’re not even tracking!

The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife give the following Driving Tips to Prevent Collisions:

- If you see one deer crossing a road, watch out for more. Deer often travel in groups and move fast to stay caught up with each other.
- If you see brake lights ahead of you, it could be because the driver has spotted a deer. Stay watchful as you drive through the area, as more deer could try to cross.
- Take note of deer-crossing signs and drive accordingly.
- Drive more slowly at night, giving yourself time to see a deer with your headlights. Lowering the brightness of your lights will make it easier to see deer.
- Be especially watchful when traveling near steep roadside banks. Deer can appear on the roadway with little or no warning.
- Be aware that headlights confuse deer and may cause them to move erratically or stop.
- If you accidentally hit and kill a deer, report the location of the deer’s body to the city, county or state highway department that has jurisdiction over the road.

FINAL WORD

Many deer that live near roads and highways that have a lot of traffic become accustomed to the sounds of moving vehicles. Deer often graze in fields and pastures near highways or woodland areas. Deer also travel across these roads to find mates or food. They either learn that they are dangerous and choose to avoid the roadways or they stop fearing them and eventually wander out onto the roads where they can cause accidents.