

Driving Safely during Deer Season



Collisions between automobiles and deer are responsible for approximately 150 fatalities and about \$1.1 billion in property damage every year in the USA, says the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. In fall and winter, when the animals mate, they pay less attention to traffic. There are active steps drivers can take to greatly reduce their chances of encountering does and bucks.

- Pay attention to the road. The use of cell phones or other electronic devices distracts drivers and reduces their ability to fully pay attention to the road and the surroundings.
- Deer are most likely to be seen in exposed areas, such as the grassy area near a road or freeway, several hours before and after dawn and dusk.
- Drive defensively and be ready to take immediate action, including braking suddenly. Don't swerve to avoid a deer directly in your path. Brake firmly when you notice a deer in or near your path, but stay in your lane. When drivers swerve to avoid a deer, they can hit another vehicle or lose control of their cars.
- If a deer appears in front of your car, slow down and honk your horn with one long blast to frighten it away. Always wear your seatbelt and insist your passengers do as well.
- If you see one deer, it's best to slow down and let the deer continue on its path. Keep in mind that deer travel in herds so if you see one, there's a good chance others are close by.
- Use your high beams when there isn't any oncoming traffic. It will help to illuminate the animal's eyes so you can spot them sooner and easier.
- If you have a choice between hitting an animal and swerving into traffic or off the road, hit the animal. It may seem cruel, but studies show many crashes happen not only when drivers hit deer, but when they collide with another vehicle in the opposite lane while trying to take evasive action.
- Deer hit and killed by vehicles should be reported to the police. Motorists are not allowed to keep the animal unless a permit is first obtained from a law enforcement officer at the scene of the accident.

