

# Understanding and Preventing Deer-Auto Collisions

Although deer-auto collisions can occur at any time of year, drivers must be especially vigilant from October through December, when most of these accidents occur. During the autumn mating season, deer are restless. And as the animals abandon summer feeding grounds to look for winter forage, they may range over wide areas, traveling across roads and highways, where they frequently pose risks to motorists. Deer-auto accidents are also common in May, when new family groups are forming.

According to the National Safety Council, there were 520,000 animal-related motor-vehicle accidents in the United States in 2001, up from 490,000 the previous year. These accidents caused more than 200 human deaths and 4,000 injuries, as well as damage to vehicles. Various factors contribute to this increase, such as growing numbers of vehicles and drivers, and an increase in the number of vehicle miles driven. As the human population continues to encroach upon wildlife habitat, the number of vehicle-animal collisions will likely increase.

Various devices such as special mirrors, reflectors and deer whistles have proved to be ineffective in preventing vehicle collisions with deer. To minimize risks, drivers should follow these common-sense tips for avoiding collisions and responding effectively should a collision occur.

## Tips To Minimize Deer-Auto Collisions

- Be attentive in early morning and evening hours, when deer are most active. When possible, use high beams, which readily reflect light from deers' eyes.
- Slow down when driving through deer habitat, such as wooded areas and fields. Heed roadside warning signs for deer, moose, and other animals. Be alert; drive with caution in deer-crossing zones.
- At nighttime, deer are usually visible less than 200 feet from your vehicle. Under optimum conditions, it takes about 317 feet to stop a car traveling at 55 mph. Slow down; anticipate braking.
- If you see deer, slow down and blow your horn with one long blast to frighten the deer away.
- Brake firmly when you notice a deer in or near your path. Do not swerve to avoid the animal; it is better to hit the deer rather than lose control of the vehicle.
- If you see one deer, others are likely to be nearby, and may follow the first across the road.

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- Use your seat belt. Most serious injuries in car/deer crashes occur when people do not use seat belts.
- Keep your windshield clean. Dirty, pitted or fogged windshields reduce your ability to see deer.
- Don't drink and drive. Even a little bit of alcohol reduces your reflexes and response time.
- If your vehicle strikes a deer, do not touch the animal. If it is alive, it will be frightened and could hurt you or cause itself further pain and suffering.
- Get your car off the road, if possible. Report the accident to the police, and report the claim to your insurance company as soon as possible.

For more information, contact your local Hartford agent or your Hartford Loss Control Consultant. Visit The Hartford's Loss Control web site at <http://www.thehartford.com/corporate/losscontrol/>

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