

MAFES Dawg Tracks



February, 2014



*Beware! Animals
in the Road*



Some of you may remember, a few years ago one of our office associates was on her way to work and “Bam,” a deer jumped out in the path of her car, she was hurt and her car was almost a total loss. How many times have you been driving on our highways and you see a dead deer on the side of the road. Someone had an accident with that animal, probably injuring them and their vehicle.

Statistics aren’t clear for the number of accidents occurring each year involving predominantly deer, but occasionally you will see other animals. According to the Information Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS) there is an estimate of 1.5 million animal-vehicle collisions each year causing \$1 billion dollars in damages.

This study also revealed that approximately 150 people die and another 10,000 are injured annually in such crashes. Individual monetary damages run anywhere from \$2,500 to \$10,000 for property losses and other damages. The National Safety Council (NSC) has figures that closely parallel these statistics of the IIHS and stated that these collisions kill as many as 350,000 deer.

The deer-vehicle collisions are happening more frequently in most areas of the USA due to the increase in deer population and also the increase of more vehicles on the road. Another reason is that people are leaving the urban areas and relocating to rural areas where the deer population is more prevalent.

Highway safety professionals suggest that the best way to avoid a collision is with pure vigilance. During daylight hours, an alert motorist can see an animal on the side of the road and normally will be able to avoid a collision. In the dark hours, the situation is usually different. It is harder to spot an animal until you’re almost too close to avoid it. Animals are more active during the evening and early morning hours, which explain the fact that 90% of deer-vehicle collisions happen between dusk and dawn.

Highway agencies are trying several different types of approaches to reduce the number of these collisions. Following are samples of these approaches:

- **Signs** – These signs serve as a warning to motorists of the heavily populated areas for deer, moose, elk, and even geese in some parts of the country.
- **Fences and Underpasses** – These are of some help to the motorists and help to preserve the deer population, but the cost of construction is usually unjustifiable. The other fact with fences is that the deer can jump over them and also when they realize that the fences obstruct their freedom, they look for other routes to cross. Underpasses will work to a point, but are very expensive to build and maintain.
- **Diversions feeding areas** – Deer tend to move about more in the fall and spring. Officers have set up feeding sites away from the roadways, but again these areas are quite expensive to operate and maintain.

- **Expanded hunting seasons** – This will help to an extent, but I have heard game officials make the statement that hunters, who hunt by the regulations do not affect the deer population as much as disease and predators.
- **Roadside reflectors** – The reflectors, when used, can be positioned on the roadsides so that when the lights reflect on the deer, they tend to “freeze.” There are different schools of thought on just how effective they are.
- **Whistles** – There are folks who have purchased the vehicle mounted whistles in our section of the country. More folks have bought them out west to combat the potential for accidents with deer, moose or elk as well. I have bought the whistles for my vehicles. I can’t tell you if they help, but I haven’t had to dodge a deer since I installed them.

PREVENT COLLISIONS –

- Slow down when you see a deer.
- If you see one, there are probably more close by.
- Deer are nocturnal so pay very close attention at night.

HOW TO HIT A DEER –

If hitting a deer is inevitable, what can you do? If you hit Deer, it probably will come through the windshield and could kill you! Some people have surmised that if you see the deer, speed up and with the front end of the vehicle rising up from the sudden burst of speed will deter the animal downward. You should not do this:

- ✓ Deer-vehicle collisions can cause extensive vehicle damage, but the most serious injuries and fatalities are caused by drivers taking evasive actions.
- ✓ Drivers need to avoid swerving actions into oncoming traffic
- ✓ Or leaving the road with the potential of hitting a tree or other objects. It is better to take the risk of hitting the deer than the risk of another vehicle or a tree.
- ✓ Apply the brakes firmly-hold on to the steering wheel and bring your vehicle to a controlled stop.

A DEER IS DOWN IN THE ROAD-

- If you are sure that the deer is dead, move it off to the shoulder.
- Be very careful about touching it, it may be alive and strike you with its powerful legs –you might be lying in the road with the deer.
- The recommendation is to call 9-1-1, move your vehicle in front of oncoming traffic and turn on your hazard lights.
- When the police arrive, fill out the accident report for your insurance company.
- The police will take care of the deer carcass.
- It is illegal to keep the meat without a permit. If you desire to take the carcass, you have to report it to the authorities.
- The police can give you a permit for the meat. It will then be your decision to keep it or donate it to a health facility.

**THE BEST SAFETY DEVICE IS A
SAFE WORKER**

**>BE ALERT<> <> BE AWAKE<><> BE
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Ted Gordon – Risk Mgmt. / Loss Control Mgr.
MAFES / MSU-ES (662) 566-2201