



FACT SHEET

Module 4.4

Wildlife-Vehicle Collisions

It's evening and you are driving home. Suddenly, as you exit a curve, a deer stands in the middle of the road. Your heart leaps into your throat as you search for an escape. What do you do?

More than 2,000 crashes with wildlife are reported annually in Montana. According to a leading insurance company, drivers have a one in 77 chance of hitting a deer in Montana. Other animals you might encounter are bears, wolves, pronghorn antelope, moose and elk.

YOU CAN AVOID A COLLISION

Sometimes you can prevent what could be a deadly collision. The best course of action is to drive defensively and observe the following tips:



Photo courtesy of the AAA Foundation

- Fasten your safety belts before starting the ignition. Safety belts are the best protection for yourself and your occupants in the event of a crash.
- Drive with caution all year in deer habitat, especially on rural two-lane roads.
- Reduce your speed when signs indicate an area for wild animal crossings.
- Use your high beams and frequently scan the sides of the road.
- Deer can dart out from any direction without warning. Deer often travel in single file. If you see one whitetail or mule deer cross the road, chances are there are more nearby.
- Deer are most active between dawn and dusk, and especially during the fall mating season and in the spring. On the move to find food, wildlife can be seen near roads, where the grass greens up first.
- Be especially alert near deer warning signs. They are placed at known deer crossing areas and alert drivers to the possible presence of deer.

IF YOU HIT AN ANIMAL

If a crash with a deer or other wild animal is unavoidable, experts in these matters recommend the following steps:

- Don't swerve.
- Use controlled braking to slow down.
- Hold on to the steering wheel.
- Honk your horn and blink your headlights.
- Come to a controlled stop.
- When possible, reduce impact by making a glancing hit with controlled steering
- If you hit an animal, pull well off the road, turn on emergency flashers, and be cautious of passing traffic.
- Do not attempt to move a large animal from the roadway, especially if it is still alive.
- Report damage to the vehicle if damages are above the legal limit required by law (\$1000 according to MCA 61-7-109).