



## Get the Facts: Oh, Deer!

### In a Nutshell

Deer-vehicle crashes peak in the autumn months, but Minnesota's large deer population makes them a safety hazard on the road all year long.

### What do I need to know to avoid a collision with a deer?

Each year drivers in Minnesota are involved in more than 6,000 recorded vehicle-deer collisions, but public safety and insurance experts believe that number may be many times higher since many incidents that don't involve passenger injury go unreported. Vehicle-deer crashes also result in millions of dollars of damage annually.

### Avoiding a vehicle-deer crash

- Drive at safe speeds and make sure all passengers wear seatbelts
- Be especially cautious from 6 to 9 p.m. when deer are most active.
- Use high beams as much as possible at night, especially in deer-active areas.
- Don't swerve to avoid a deer. Swerving can cause drivers to lose control and travel off the road or into oncoming traffic.
- *Motorcyclists:* Avoid night and low-light riding periods. As a rider, your best option in a deer encounter is to use both brakes for maximum braking and then to drive carefully around the animal at low speed if there is space. If a crash is imminent, keep eyes and head up to improve chances of the bike upright. Wear a helmet and other protective gear to prevent injury or death in a crash.
- Watch the shoulder for deer eye reflections and silhouettes. If something looks suspicious, slow down. Don't count on deer whistles or deer fences to deter deer from crossing roads.
- Slow down in typical deer-active areas. This includes spots where roads divide agricultural fields from forest land and forested areas between dusk and dawn.

*In the five-year period of 2016–2020 in Minnesota, 6,218 deer crashes were reported to the Department of Public Safety, resulting in 18 deaths.*

*15 of the 18 deaths in this period were motorcyclists.*

*These crashes also resulted in 124 serious injuries, of which 109 were motorcyclists.*





- Deer are unpredictable. They stop in the mid-road when crossing, then cross and quickly cross back. They move toward approaching vehicles. Blow your horn to urge deer to leave the road. Stop if a deer stays on the road, don't try to go around it.

### **After a vehicle-deer crash**

- Any Minnesota resident may claim a road-killed animal by contacting a law enforcement officer. An authorization permit will be issued allowing the individual to lawfully possess the deer.
- If a deer is struck but not killed by a vehicle, keep a distance as deer may recover and move on. If a deer does not move on, or poses a public safety risk, report the incident to a DNR conservation officer or other local law enforcement agency.

**Sources:** Minnesota Department of Public Safety,  
Office of Traffic Safety  
Minnesota Department of Natural Resources

