

## **Safety Tip: Because deer don't always cross the road at the deer crossing signs...**

### **Warning to motorists: Fall is the peak season for deer-vehicle collisions**

Cars and deer can be a lethal combination. Deer migration and mating season generally runs from October through December and causes a dramatic increase in the movement of the deer population. As a result, more deer-vehicle collisions occur in this period than at any other time of year, so drivers need to be especially cautious.

Urban sprawl is displacing deer from their natural habitat and the deer population is growing. As a result, many of them find their way onto highways and into suburban neighborhoods, especially during deer season.

Fortunately, there are steps you can take to decrease the likelihood of being involved in a deer-vehicle collision.

Drivers should be aware of the following:

- Deer are not just found on rural roads near wooded areas; many deer crashes occur on busy highways near cities.
- Deer are unpredictable, especially when faced with glaring headlights, blowing horns and fast-moving vehicles. They often dart into traffic.
- Deer often move in groups. If you see one, there are likely to be more in the vicinity.

Drivers should take the following precautions:

- Drive with caution when moving through deer-crossing zones, in areas known to have a large deer population and in areas where roads divide agricultural fields from forestland.
- Always wear your seatbelt. The Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS) reports that in a study of fatal animal crashes, 60 percent of people killed were not wearing a seatbelt. Sixty-five percent of people killed in animal-related crashes while riding motorcycles were not wearing a helmet.
- When driving at night, use high-beam headlights when there is no oncoming traffic. The high-beams will better illuminate the eyes of a deer on or near the roadway.
- Be especially attentive from sunset to midnight and during the hours shortly before or after sunrise. These are the highest risk times for deer-vehicle collisions.
- Brake firmly when you notice a deer in or near your path, but stay in your lane. Many serious crashes occur when drivers swerve to avoid a deer and hit another vehicle or lose control of their cars.
- Do not rely on devices such as deer whistles, deer fences and reflectors to deter deer. These devices have not proven effective.

In the event your vehicle strikes a deer, try to avoid going near or touching the animal. A frightened and wounded deer can hurt you or further injure itself. If the deer is blocking the roadway and poses a danger to other motorists, you should call the police immediately. Contact your insurance agent or company representative as quickly as possible to report any damage to your car. Collision with a deer or other animals is covered under the optional comprehensive portion of your automobile policy.

*Insurance Information Institute, October 2009.*