

Auto

A V O I D D E E R - V E H I C L E C O L L I S I O N S

As deer populations soar in many suburban and semi-rural areas, deer-vehicle collisions follow suit. Nationwide, more than 1.5 million motorists hit deer each year, according to IIHS studies. Those crashes kill approximately 150 people and cost more than \$1 billion in vehicle damage.

While you can't predict the movements of a deer, you can improve your odds of avoiding a crash.

- **Increase vigilance during the fall.** According to the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS), fall – deer breeding and migration season – ranks as the peak time for deer-vehicle collisions. Simply put, as the antlered Romeos search for mates, they're not looking out for cars. Wildlife experts estimate that one-half to two-thirds of deer collisions occur from October through December.
- **Cut your speed.** When traveling in deer country, *especially around dawn and from sunset to midnight* (prime deer activity times), slow down. Of all the crash-reduction techniques studied by the IIHS, the most effective included temporary deer-warning signs, which caught drivers' attention and caused them to reduce their speeds. Compared with similar unsigned areas (or those with permanent signs), deer strikes were cut by half.
- **Use high beam headlights on rural roads** and be especially careful on newly constructed highways. Serious crashes occur most often on rural stretches of road with speed limits of 55 mph or more. High beams better illuminate the eyes of a deer near the roadway.
- **If you see one deer, expect more.** Deer often travel in groups of two or three. They may dart out to join another that has just crossed the road.
- **Don't swerve.** You're much more likely to wreck your car and risk injury or death if you swerve to avoid a deer, rather than hit it. Slow down as quickly as possible, stay in your lane, and maintain control.
- **Forget deer whistles.** Though they've been sold for more than 20 years, deer whistles (which attach to your car and emit an ultrasonic noise claimed to scare off deer) haven't been shown to cut collisions.

And a final thought: Always buckle up or, if you're a motorcyclist, wear your helmet. In IIHS studies, 60-65% of deer-collision fatalities occur among people who are not properly restrained and protected.

