

MoDot Kansas City District  
Steve Porter, 816-607-2152

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### Collision With Deer More Likely During Fall Breeding Season

It's bad enough we have to worry about distracted drivers. Now add to that distracted deer, whose minds are on breeding and not on highway traffic that puts deer and drivers at risk.

Deer-vehicle collisions on Missouri highways typically increase in fall months when deer become more active and weather turns colder. Bucks and does are invigorated by cooler weather, and by the season's biological drive to mate. They won't be watching for you, so you'd better stay alert for them.

Thousands of collisions with deer occur each year on Missouri's highways, sometimes resulting in fatalities and causing hundreds of injuries. Although some accidents with deer are unavoidable, motorists can take extra precautions to reduce the chance of striking these agile but unpredictable animals.

First, be aware that deer are coming out of the wooded areas to reach clearings now. Bucks are seeking mates and aggressively establishing their territories, challenging other bucks. Does are leaving their maturing fawns, beginning the process of separation. And farmers are harvesting corn and beans, which drives deer from natural cover into open areas like highways.

Be prepared for deer to cross or dart into a road at any time, particularly around dusk and dawn. To increase your long-distance visibility, use your high beams if other cars aren't approaching. If you encounter a deer, don't sound your horn or swerve. Slow down or stop until the animal passes. Honking may startle deer into running in front, or even into you. Swerving may only place you in the path of the veering animal - or another deer or two coming right behind the first. You may also lose control and cause more harm and damage than colliding with the deer.

Finally, remember to stay alert, slow down, stay off the cell phone and buckle up. Most people injured in deer-vehicle collisions weren't wearing a seat belt.

Deer crossing signs are posted in areas where collisions or sightings occur frequently, but deer are unpredictable. If you should hit a deer, report the accident to your local sheriff's office, the Missouri Highway Patrol or municipal police. Don't approach an injured or frightened deer because their sharp, hard hooves can seriously injure or kill you. MoDOT's maintenance crews will remove dead animals as quickly as they can get to them.

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