



# AVOIDING DEER & ANIMAL STRIKES

## A GROWING CHALLENGE:

The Insurance Institute for Highway Safety estimates that, because of the booming deer population, 1.5 million deer-related accidents occur each year. Deer are struck in three out of four accidents involving animals. Nationally, collisions between deer and vehicles cause some \$1.1 billion in vehicle damage, kill 150 people and injure another 29,000 people every year. Accidents with deer are likely to occur on rural roads with a speed limit of 55 mph or higher, in darkness, or at dusk and dawn. In 60% of the accidents involving human fatalities with animal-vehicle collisions, the fatality was caused not by the collision with the deer, but failure to wear a safety belt. The animal-vehicle collision is the first event and often not the deadliest. It is what occurs to the vehicle after the initial collision that is often the cause of the fatality, i.e. striking a fixed object or another vehicle(s).

## TIPS TO AVOID ANIMAL STRIKES AND MINIMIZE THEIR IMPACT

**SCAN THE ROAD AHEAD:** Constantly scan the road ahead and watch for the reflection of deer eyes and for deer silhouettes on the shoulder of the road. If anything looks slightly suspicious, slow down.

**PAY ATTENTION TO SIGNS:** Slow down and use caution if they see a highway sign warning that the area is high traffic for deer. Every state is home to at least a few deer, but fleet drivers should especially mindful while driving through states known for their heavy populations of the animals. Depending on where your truck routes are, drivers should also watch for elk, horses, moose, wolves, and cougars. In addition, many rural highways are built along creeks, rivers, and lakes, all of which attract deer. If your driver routes go through a heavily forested area or anywhere that water meets the road, the person behind the wheel should be aware that they are driving directly through deer habitats.

**BUCKLE UP:** More than half of fatalities from animal strikes happen after the collision because drivers aren't wearing a seatbelt. Not only is buckling up the law, but it can also save your life.

**SLOW DOWN:** Always drive the speed limit so you have enough time to scan the road for wildlife and react if an animal crosses your path. Also, remember that your visibility decreases at dawn and dusk, so adjust your vehicle's speed accordingly.

**DON'T TAILGATE:** Following other vehicles too closely reduces your field of vision and shortens your reaction time.

**KNOW THE AREA:** Be extra cautious on roads surrounded by farmland or trees on either side. Look for posted animal crossing signs and slow down when you see them. Remember where you've seen wildlife in the past

**STAY ALERT:** Use your high beams at night if there is no oncoming traffic. Watch for the reflection of deer eyes in your headlights. Look for shadows near the shoulder of the road or signs of animal movement between you and the lights of oncoming cars.

**DON'T SWERVE:** Don't swerve to avoid striking a deer, as that increases the risk of hitting another vehicle or losing control of your vehicle. If you swerve to avoid an animal, you run the risk of colliding with a guardrail, utility pole or other stationary object. You also might drive off the side of the road and experience a rollover. If you can't avoid a collision, slow down as much as possible and brace for impact. It's safer than putting your life at risk by swerving.

**LOOK FOR ANIMAL FRIENDS:** Deer travel in packs. If you see one, it's likely more will be nearby.

**DON'T TRUST DEER HORNS:** They're not proven to work and may startle the deer, causing it to stand still in the roadway.

**KNOW WHEN DEER MOVE:** Be especially attentive around dawn and dusk. Deer tend to be particularly active between 6-9 p.m.

**KNOW THE MONTHS WHEN DEER CRASHES MORE COMMON:** More than half of the animals hit were deer. Deer crashes happen the most often from October through December, the deer hunting and mating season.

Team Safe Trucking's mission is to reduce accidents through enhanced driver training and effective fleet management and to recruit new, safety-focused drivers to deliver a sustainable and profitable supply chain.



## HOW TO REACT IF YOU HIT A DEER

**FIRST:** Move your vehicle to a safe place. Pull over to the side of the road and turn on your hazard lights and place emergency triangles. If you must leave your vehicle, stay off the road and out of the way of any oncoming vehicles. Deer are most active at dusk and dawn — times when you or your vehicle may be less visible to other motorists.

**SECOND:** Stay away from the animal. A frightened, wounded deer could use its powerful legs and sharp hooves to harm you. Local authorities and game wardens in the area are usually responsible for any expenses concerning the animal's care, treatment, and cleanup of the accident scene. If you hit a deer and it runs away, take pictures of any blood/hair and then look at your rig to inspect for damage. If there is damage, call the authorities. If there is no damage, you may drive your rig.

**THIRD:** The operator or owner having knowledge of a motor vehicle that has been involved in an accidental collision with a deer, moose, bear, or wild turkey shall, by the quickest means, report the accident to a law enforcement officer. When contacting the authorities, let them know if the deer is in a dangerous spot on the road so that it can be removed.

**FOURTH:** The officer shall investigate an accident reported, if the officer finds that the motor vehicle has sustained apparent damage as the result of the collision, shall give a certificate that entitles the person to the ownership of the carcass. The person may then take possession and immediately remove the entire carcass from the scene of the collision.

**BE AWARE:** A person who fails to report an accident in accordance with the State Law, commits a civil violation for which a fine may be adjudged. Stay away from the animal. A frightened, wounded deer could use its powerful legs and sharp hooves to harm you.

**DOCUMENT THE INCIDENT:** If it's safe to do so, take photographs of the roadway, your surroundings, damage to your vehicle and any injuries you or your passengers sustained. If witnesses stop, take down their account of what occurred, and ask for their contact information.

**DON'T ASSUME YOUR VEHICLE IS SAFE TO DRIVE:** Double-check that your rig is drivable after colliding with a deer. Look for leaking fluid, loose parts, tire damage, broken lights, a hood that won't latch and other safety hazards. If your vehicle seems unsafe in any way, call for a tow.

## HOW MUCH DAMAGE CAN A DEER DO TO A LOG TRUCK?

Anywhere from very little to very much. If you hit it wrong, it can blow out the steer tire, which can cause a VERY bad wreck. If a piece of the deer gets caught underneath it could rip some brake lines or maybe puncture an air bag. On a mountain road in the middle of the night that would be bad. Deer vehicle collisions lead to about 200 human deaths and \$1.1 billion in property damage every year. State and federal governments, insurance companies, and drivers spend an additional \$3 billion to reduce and manage the increasing number of deer-vehicle collisions.

## INSURANCE

**COMPREHENSIVE INSURANCE:** Comprehensive covers an array of situations, but most importantly, it can cover animal collisions for this situation. Remember, this coverage applies if you only hit the animal.

**COLLISION INSURANCE:** Collision covers the cost of damages because of an accident. Such situations like hit-and-runs, an accident caused by other motorists, or you swerving to avoid an animal and hitting another vehicle or property will be covered under this type of insurance.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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