

Watch out for that....DEER!!!

Illinois Department of Natural Resources, Division of Wildlife Resources



Facts & Tips on Deer/Vehicle Accidents

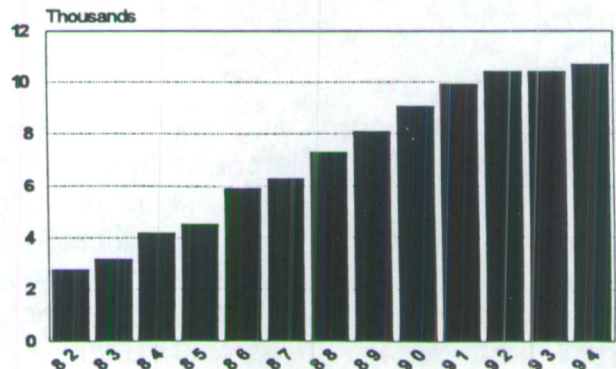
White-Tailed Deer: Another Roadway Hazard

White-tailed deer are beautiful, graceful creatures that many Illinoisans in both rural and urban areas enjoy. Over the years, the opportunity to appreciate deer has increased with the growth in deer numbers. However, the increasing number of whitetails has also created a need for people to learn how to live with deer. Encounters with deer on roadways are particularly good examples of why people need to learn more about this animal.

In the 1980's, deer-vehicle accidents

(DVA's) increased dramatically in Illinois. Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) summaries show that during the last 13 years the number of DVA's increased by more than 300 percent statewide (Figure 1). To avoid becoming another DVA statistic, motorists should be aware of when and where they are most likely to encounter deer on Illinois' roadways.

Figure 1. Deer/Vehicle Accident Trends on State Maintained Roads



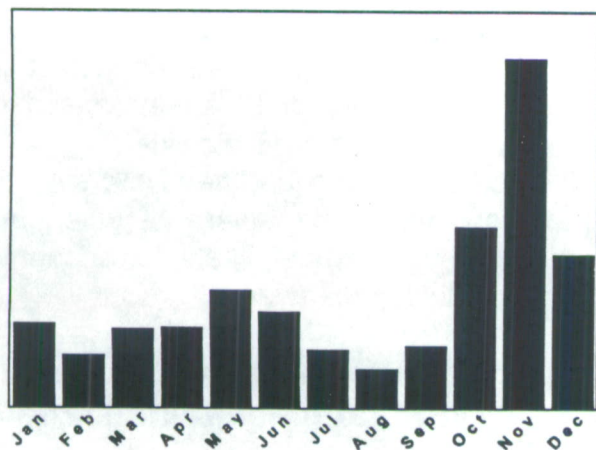
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When Do Most DVA's Occur?

The highest frequencies of DVA'S occur from October through January, with a secondary peak during April and June (Figure 2). The fall-early winter period is most hazardous due to increased deer activity. This period encompasses the deer's breeding season when both sexes may exhibit more widely ranging movements. The bucks (males) become extremely mobile and may be oblivious to vehicles as they actively search for does (females).

Figure 2. Relative Frequency of Deer/Vehicle Accidents by Month

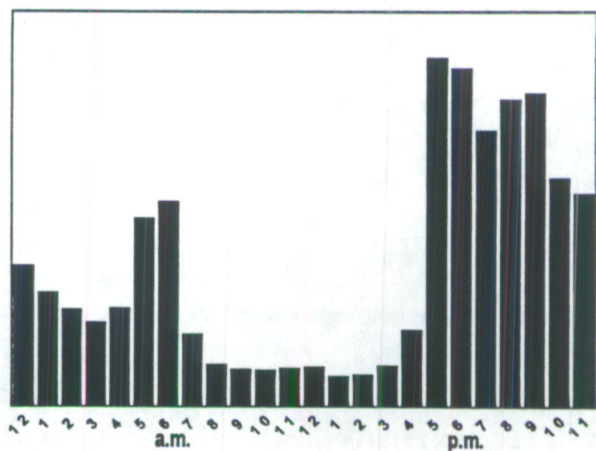


During the spring, does preparing to give birth become less tolerant of their young from the previous year and may drive them away. These young deer (approximately 1 year old) may leave the area where they were born and grew up, and disperse into new surroundings to establish their own

home range or territory. This dispersal results in more animals ranging into new and unfamiliar areas. Spring is also when deer turn up in strange places such as downtown areas of municipalities, corporate centers, car dealerships, and other areas of high vehicular traffic.

White-tailed deer are considered crepuscular animals, which means that they are most active during the hours around dawn and dusk. Such movements often involve travel between bedding and feeding areas. Unfortunately, this activity pattern tends to closely coincide with traffic rush hours near urban/suburban areas. The potential for hitting a deer appears highest during these peak activity periods, and remains high during the evening hours when deer are concealed by darkness (Figure 3).

Figure 3. Relative Frequency of Deer/Vehicle Accidents by Hour of Day



Where Do High Numbers of DVA's Occur?

White-tailed deer are creatures of habit and often use well-established trails and travel lanes during their daily movements. Often these trails will follow vegetated corridors bordering waterways, railroad rights-of-way, field edges or fence rows, or even dirt roads. Based on IDOT summaries of reported locations of DVA's, motorists should be particularly **wary** where roadways cross creeks and rivers, where roadways bisect fence rows or **where** field edges run perpendicular to the road, and where wooded corridors **are** bisected by the roadway.

Roadways through **wooded** corridors are more likely to have **higher** rates of DVA's than open sections of **road**, especially if the open areas on either **side** of the road are harvested agricultural fields. Motorists should be aware of the vegetation or potential deer cover **along** roadways and proceed with added **caution** in areas where woody vegetation or **other** deer cover is near the road. Extra caution should be exercised when **clumps** of trees or shrubs are very close to the **road** edge or when the roadside has a **steep** bank. Under such conditions, an unwary **driver** may not see a deer in time to avoid **an** accident.

Avoiding DVA's

- ✓ On roadways that **you** frequently travel, keep track of **locations** where you have observed live deer, vehicle-killed deer, and habitat **that** seems to offer

potential as a deer travel lane. The more aware that you are of these potential 'hotspots', the less likely that you will be surprised by an unexpected deer crossing.

- ✓ Remain particularly alert during the hours around dawn and dusk, especially during the fall and spring.
- ✓ Slow down in areas where woody, brushy or other dense vegetation along the roadside may conceal deer.
- ✓ Continually scan roadsides for deer or their "eye shine" (reflection of lights by the deer's eyes) after dark.
- ✓ Reduce speed when deer are observed crossing the road; others may follow and cross the road single-file behind **the leader**.
- ✓ Don't assume that deer will proceed directly across a roadway or maintain a constant rate of speed. They may suddenly stop, or dart back the way they came.
- ✓ When slowing down or stopping due to deer on or near the road, do not slam on the brakes if other vehicles are behind you. If possible, use the emergency/hazard flashers or pump your brakes to warn other drivers.
- ✓ Attempt to scare deer from the road by flashing your headlights and sounding the horn in short bursts.
- ✓ Maintain control of your vehicle. The likelihood of injury is much greater if you swerve into oncoming traffic or stationary objects (trees, guard rails, barricades, etc.) along the road edge.

What To Do If You Hit a Deer?

First, the motorist should pull safely off the road and turn on the emergency/hazard flashers. **Do not park the vehicle on the roadway.** Also, do not attempt to remove the deer, especially if it is still alive, from a busy roadway. Contact local, county or state law enforcement to euthanize an injured deer and also to file an accident report if an insurance claim is anticipated. Illinois law requires that all accidents resulting in \$500 damage to a vehicle be reported and an accident report filed.

If a deer is struck and killed, the driver has priority in claiming the carcass for his/her use. If the driver does not want the deer,

any Illinois resident may claim the animal. Any person possessing a deer killed as a result of a DVA must report it to the Illinois Department of Natural Resources hotline (1-800-406-3477) within 24 hours if the collision occurred Monday through Thursday. Deer killed Friday through Sunday or on holidays must be reported during the next regular workday. The hotline is operable from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. on Monday through Friday. Persons calling the hotline should be prepared to supply the following information: date of the accident; time of the accident; accident location (county and closest town); and sex of the deer. An authorization number will be issued to allow the lawful possession of the deer.

Deer Hotline

1/800-406-3477

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