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Be Cautious of Deer Near Highways This Fall

NOVEMBER 07TH 2013 BY DEE LOFLIN

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*Submitted by
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Missouri - If you were to pick the Missouri city where you are most likely to strike a deer with your car, would you pick Kansas City? Maybe Lee's Summit? They ranked first and second in 2011 for deer-vehicle collisions in Missouri.

Deer-vehicle collisions on Missouri highways increase each fall when bucks become more active and weather turns colder. A recent insurance survey now places Missouri among the highest states in deer-vehicle crashes. Some 3,980 collisions with deer occurred last year on Missouri's highways, resulting in five fatalities and 411 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. Most (85%) of deer strike crashes occur from 5 p.m. to 6:49 a.m. 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

but slow down or stop until the animal passes. If you see one, others may be right behind. Swerving may only place you in the path of the veering animal or another deer or two. Don't try to swerve to avoid a deer. It's better to lose control and cause more harm than good.

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Finally, remember to stay alert, slow down 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.

LAST UPDATED ON NOVEMBER 07TH 2013 BY DEE LOFLIN

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