

Tips for Driving in Deer Country

Vehicles kill hundreds of deer each year in Washington. Deer will cross roads at any time of day or night, creating a hazard for the vehicles, passengers, and deer.

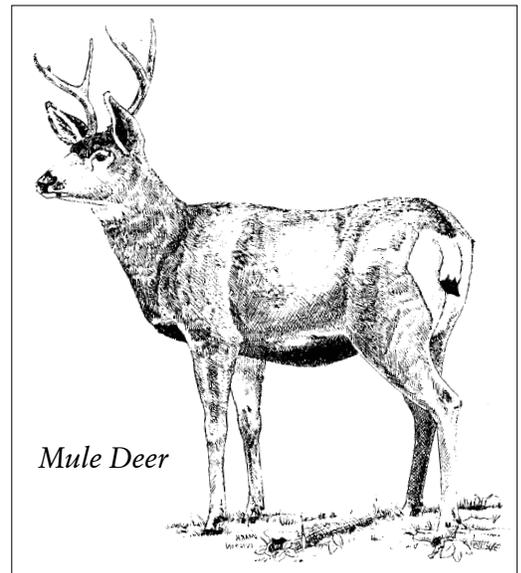
More than half of all deer/vehicle collisions occur in October and November. The rut (mating season) and peak days for hunting may account for this.

Here are driving tips to help prevent collisions:

- Deer are most active at dawn and dusk. Be especially watchful during these times.
- One deer crossing the road may be a sign that more deer are about to cross. Watch for other deer—they will move fast to catch up with leaders, mothers, or mates and may not pay attention to traffic.
- When you see brake lights, it could be because the driver ahead of you has spotted a deer. Stay alert as you drive by the spot, as more deer could try to cross.
- Wonder why the person ahead is driving so slowly? The driver may know where to slow down and be extra alert for deer. Don't be too quick to pass, and watch out.
- Take note of deer-crossing signs and drive accordingly. They were put there for a reason.
- Try to drive more slowly at night, giving yourself time to see a deer with your headlights. Lowering the brightness of your dashboard lights slightly will make it easier to see deer.
- Be especially watchful when traveling near steep roadside banks. Deer will pop onto the roadway with little or no warning.
- Be aware that headlights confuse deer and may cause them to move erratically or stop. Young animals in particular do not recognize that vehicles are a threat.
- Deer hooves slip on pavement and a deer may fall in front of your vehicle just when you think it is jumping away.
- Deer whistles, small devices that can be mounted on your vehicle, emit a shrill sound that supposedly alerts deer nearby. (Humans cannot hear the sound.) How well the devices work is not scientifically known.

If a collision with a deer seems imminent, take your foot off the accelerator and brake lightly. But—and this is critical—keep a firm hold on the steering wheel while keeping the vehicle straight. Do not swerve in an attempt to miss the deer. Insurance adjusters claim that more car damage and personal injury is caused when drivers attempt to avoid collision with a deer and instead collide with guardrails or roll down grades.

If you accidentally hit and kill a deer, try to move the animal off the road—providing you can do so in complete safety. Otherwise, report the location of the deer's body to the city, county, or state highway department with jurisdiction for the road. If no action is taken, contact the non-emergency number of



the local police department, and the agency will arrange for the body to be removed. This will prevent scavengers from being attracted onto the road, and eliminate a potential traffic hazard.

If the deer is wounded, call the non-emergency number of the local police department and describe the animal's location. Emphasize that the injured deer is a traffic hazard to help ensure that someone will come quickly.

Adapted from "Living with Wildlife in the Pacific Northwest" (see <http://wdfw.wa.gov/wlm/living.htm>)

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