



Deer-Vehicle Collision Information Kit

Use Caution to Avoid Deer-Vehicle Collisions

LINCOLN, Neb. – Deer become more active in the fall and because of it, drivers should be more alert than ever when out on the road.

Deer pose a potentially dangerous threat to themselves and the occupants of vehicles traveling Nebraska's highways and country roads, especially during October and November.

As the harvest begins, crop and cover patterns will change quickly and daylight hours will become shorter. As the deer breeding season approaches, deer will have a lot of things to distract them. Deer activity increases and movement peaks each day near dawn and just after dusk.

Here are some things drivers can do to try to avoid deer-vehicle accidents:

- When driving near shelterbelts, woodlots, creeks, or where crops are still standing, especially during evening or early morning, reduce your speed and watch for deer.
- When you spot a deer, assume there will be others in the same area, either ahead of or behind the one you have seen.
- Be prepared to stop suddenly.
- Many places where deer are known to travel are posted with deer crossing signs, but the absence of a sign does not mean a deer will not unexpectedly appear.
- Deer often seem to be disoriented or confused by headlights. Some react by freezing in the light, some dart into the path of the vehicle, others bolt away in the opposite direction. Sometimes deer that have just crossed the road ahead of the vehicle suddenly change direction and run back into the path of a vehicle or collide with it.
- Honk your horn and flash your headlights to frighten deer away from the side of the road. If there is other traffic on the road, you can activate your emergency flashers and tap your brakes to alert other drivers to the potential danger.
- Anticipate the possibility of a deer unexpectedly crossing in front of you and plan ahead to avoid swerving, turning or braking the vehicle too sharply if a deer suddenly appears.

If a deer is struck and the driver wants to salvage it, the driver may possess the deer but must contact a Nebraska Game and Parks Commission conservation officer within 24 hours to obtain a salvage tag.

Tips for Avoiding Deer-Vehicle Collisions

- Be alert for deer at all times, especially during dusk and dawn and especially when driving near shelterbelts, woodlots, creeks, or where crops still are standing.
- Reduce your speed at night and be prepared to stop suddenly.
- If you see one deer, expect to see others.
- Stay on the road and strike the animal; do not swerve or leave the roadway and collide with a roadside object and do not cross the centerline.
- Expect more deer near deer crossing signs because they should be installed where this is true.
- Honk your horn or flash your headlights to frighten the deer away.
- Search and scan the roadway and roadside ahead.
- Keep your windshield clean.
- Buckle your seatbelt.
- Stay sober.
- Keep your headlights properly adjusted.
- Use your high beams where possible.

Avoiding Car-deer Collisions

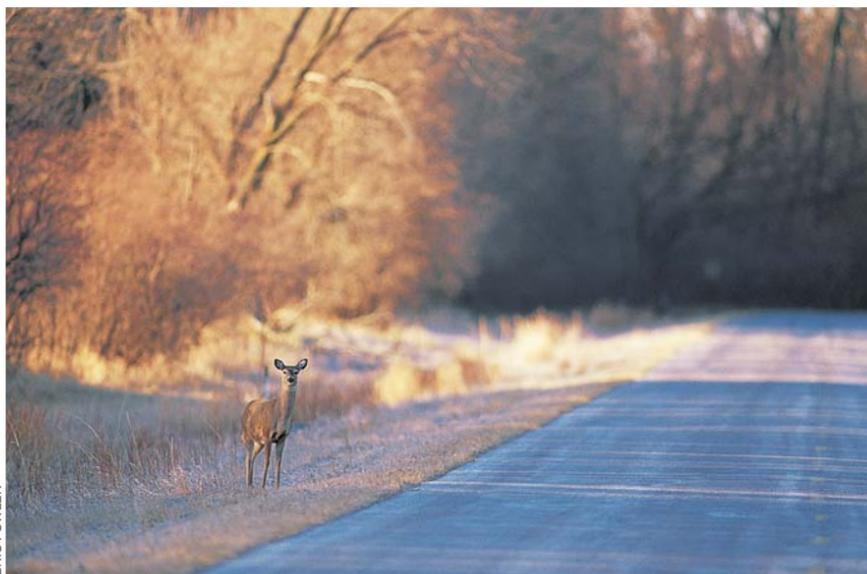
Defensive driving, seasonal awareness and liberal deer harvest reduce wrecks

By Doug Carroll

The doe seemingly came out of nowhere. One minute there was nothing but darkness and the twin beams of my car's headlights illuminating my side of the four-lane highway. The next minute a ghostly figure was moving from the grassy median, striding purposefully

across the pavement, seemingly oblivious to the heavy metal beast with bright, gleaming eyes hurtling toward it.

My foot was on the brake the instant my brain registered movement from the corner of my eye. Pressing hard enough to cut my speed significantly without locking



ERIC FOWLER

Unpredictable at best, a deer standing alongside the road is a potential hazard that all drivers should pay particular attention to.



DOUG CARROLL

In today's fast-paced society, deer carcasses are a common sight on Nebraska roadsides and illustrate the need for careful driving.

up, I tried to steer around the deer without losing control but I could not swerve in time. My car's front quarter panel smashed into the doe's chest and neck with a loud thud, spinning the animal and sending its rear into the driver's side door.

Coming to a complete stop, I waited for my heart rate to slow and the adrenaline to ebb from my body. The incident happened so fast that my youngest son and daughter, who were riding with me, did not know what had happened. Answering their many questions, I realized how lucky we had been – if I had not been watching, I

might have hit the deer squarely with the front of the car, causing more damage and sending the animal into the windshield. In 25-plus years of driving, most of it in prime deer habitat, this was the first time I had hit a deer. I hope it will be the last. Here are some tips that might help you avoid a similar incident.

Beware at Twilight

First, be very cautious when driving at night, especially at dawn or dusk. Deer are crepuscular, meaning they are most active at twilight. They usually feed in the evening, rest for a while to

chew their cud, then feed again in the early morning hours before moving to their bedding area shortly after sunrise. This means they are often most active in the low-light hours when people are heading to or from work, school or other activities.

Second, be very alert when traveling through deer territory – which is most of Nebraska. The population is more dense in some areas, such as along riverbottoms and near eastern Nebraska farm fields, but deer can be found anywhere, at any time – even in cities. Last winter I saw two deer feeding along the railroad tracks just a block

from downtown Lincoln. While I was alert to deer the night that I hit the doe, I probably had a false sense of security because I was not traveling through a river or creek drainage.

There was, however, a small finger of trees bisecting two cornfields next to the highway, and that leads to another tip: Deer often travel along drainages and treelines as they move from one area to another. They are also creatures of habit and use the same travel corridors year after year. The places where these corridors cross heavily traveled roads are often marked with deer crossing signs. Don't ignore them – they are



not placed arbitrarily. Of course, an absence of signs doesn't mean an area is safe – deer can't read. Pay special attention to any place where you've seen deer in the past, whether they were dead or alive. One thing I did right on the night I hit the deer was that I was

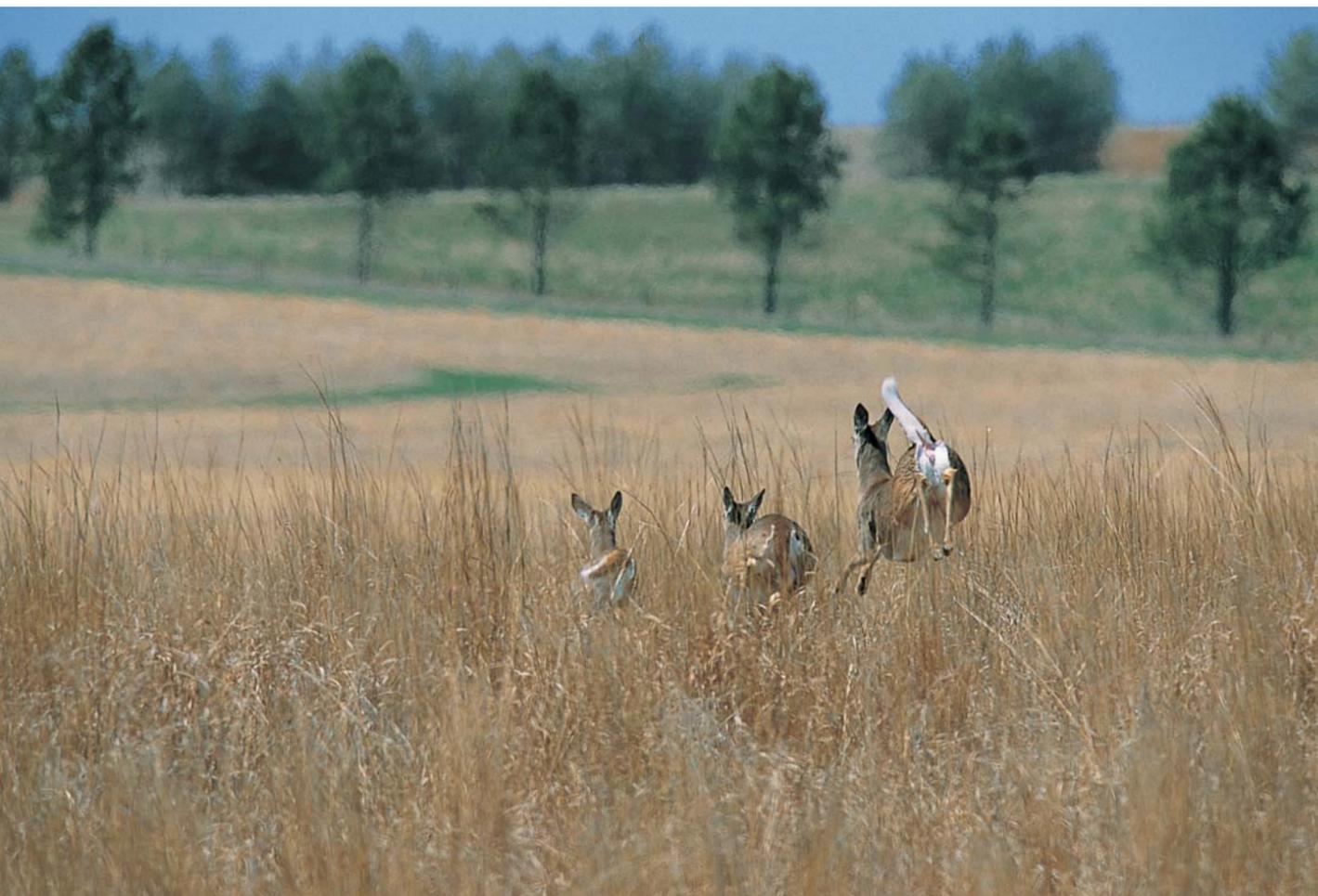
watching the edge of the road ahead. Watch the sides of the road and slow down if you see a deer or its eyeshine near the road. Deer are unpredictable. If you see a deer and it seems to be looking at your car and waiting for you to pass, be prepared to stop if the deer suddenly starts to cross the road. Even if a deer crosses safely in front of your vehicle, slow down. Deer often travel in small groups and others might be following. Or the deer that just crossed the road might reverse course and recross it.

Avoid Extreme Maneuvers

Another thing I did right was I did not take extreme evasive action. Drivers sometimes make a bad situation worse by veering into oncoming traffic or hitting a fixed object such as a pole

while trying to avoid a deer. If you cannot stop in time to avoid a crash, brake until the last fraction of a second before impact, then let off your brakes. This will cause the front end of your vehicle to rise, increasing the odds that the deer will pass beneath the car or truck instead of being launched into your windshield. My youngsters and I were buckled up, which made us law-abiding and, more important, a lot safer. The odds of surviving a collision without serious injury or death are two to three times greater for people wearing seat belts.

A deer can appear in front of your car at any time of year, but most deer/vehicle collisions occur in autumn. When the fall crop harvest begins, deer's summer feeding and bedding patterns change and they move more often. Daylight grows shorter in the



Social by nature, deer seldom travel alone. If you see one deer crossing the road, expect others to be with it.

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By increasing the doe harvest in parts of the state, the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission has reduced the deer population where crop depredation complaints and deer-vehicle accidents are high.

fall, meaning more people are traveling at dawn and dusk when deer are most active. Deer also do more running around during their fall breeding season. It's no wonder the collision count goes up during autumn.

Collisions Are Costly

The average number of deer/vehicle accidents reported in Nebraska from 2000 through 2004 was almost 3,740, peaking at 3,951 in 2003. These numbers come from the Highway Safety – Traffic Engineering Division of the Nebraska Department of Roads, but they only include those accidents that were investigated and reported by local law enforcement personnel. Many more collisions occur that are not reported or investigated.

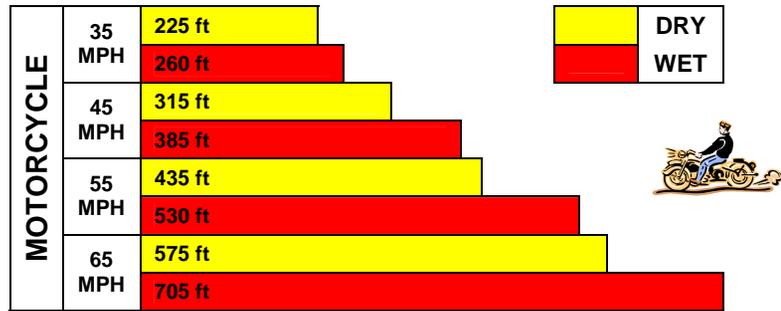
The number of deer-vehicle collision reports dropped significantly in 2004, which might indicate the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission's liberalized antlerless harvest over the past few years is beginning to reduce deer populations in some parts of the state. Deer-vehicle collision reports and crop depredation complaints are the major reasons why the Commission tries to reduce deer populations in some areas. Wildlife managers have made special efforts to reduce the population where complaints and accidents have been high in recent years, especially in southeastern Nebraska.

While the chance of hitting a deer is low, drivers should consider the possibility every time they get behind the wheel. More than 150 people are killed

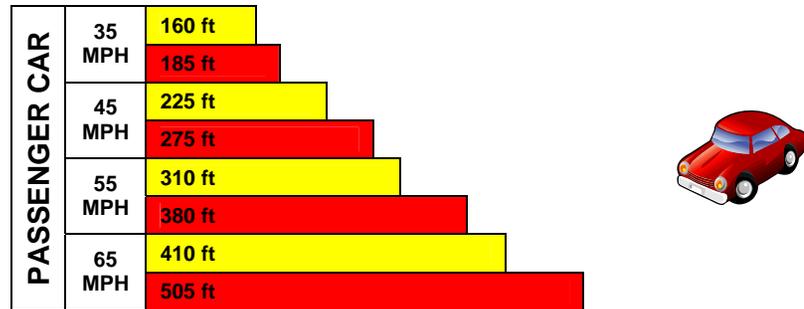
and 29,000 injured annually in animal-vehicle collisions nationwide. Hitting a deer can be expensive too. According to the Insurance Information Institute, a national organization that provides information about the insurance industry, the average minimum cost for repairing a vehicle after a collision with a deer is \$2,000. A federal General Accounting Office report states that deer-automobile accidents result in more than \$1 billion in property damage annually.

While at one time deer were uncommon in Nebraska, there are now approximately 300,000 deer in the state each fall. Many deer will rarely, if ever, cross a road, but enough do so on a regular enough basis that it makes sense to keep an eye out for them. Doing so will save lives and money. ■

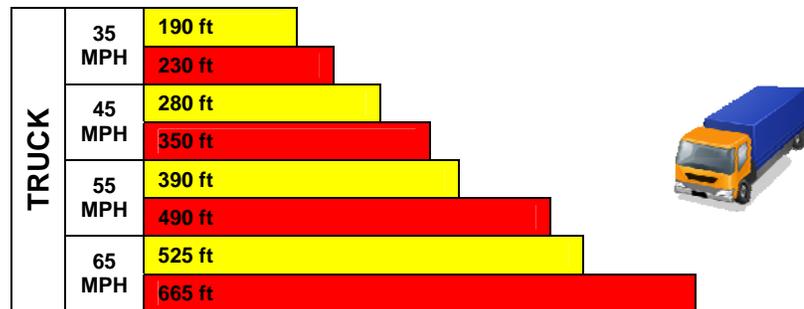
SPEED & STOPPING DISTANCES



100 ft	200 ft	300 ft	400 ft	500 ft	600 ft
1 Football Field 100 yds			2 Football Fields 200 yds		



100 ft	200 ft	300 ft	400 ft	500 ft	600 ft
1 Football Field 100 yds			2 Football Fields 200 yds		



100 ft	200 ft	300 ft	400 ft	500 ft	600 ft
1 Football Field 100 yds			2 Football Fields 200 yds		

SPEED & STOPPING DISTANCES

Drivers who exceed the posted speed limit or drive too fast for conditions increase the length of time and distance necessary to stop their vehicles. The faster a vehicle is moving, the greater distance it will travel while the driver reacts to a situation. It is important for drivers to adjust their driving behavior to adapt to road and weather conditions.

The estimated distances which could be needed by a typical driver to stop a motorcycle, automobile, and tractor/trailer are shown on the opposite side of this piece. These estimated distances are shown in feet and a football field is used as a common reference point.

Note that the estimated distances are based on distances required by Federal regulations or based on those assumed for roadway design purposes by the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials.

Provided by:
 U.S. Department of Transportation
 National Highway Traffic Safety Administration

**Nebraska Animal-Involved Crashes
By County
2005 - 2015**

County	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Adams	46	48	50	47	52	58	50	40	28	26	39
Antelope	29	41	45	43	41	43	33	27	19	23	30
Arthur	3	4	3	3	6	0	3	0	2	0	2
Banner	8	9	6	11	8	6	12	14	7	13	11
Blaine	3	6	2	1	5	3	2	1	2	1	2
Boone	22	22	12	20	19	19	17	14	8	9	16
Box Butte	10	16	10	14	13	20	21	29	16	11	20
Boyd	7	8	12	6	15	10	7	11	8	4	2
Brown	7	10	10	20	28	15	27	26	25	11	17
Buffalo	77	83	85	94	80	94	113	88	77	69	79
Burt	42	46	23	27	35	40	33	27	15	25	13
Butler	23	29	26	20	27	14	19	19	15	16	19
Cass	131	154	116	126	103	101	93	48	42	46	67
Cedar	20	29	24	35	32	37	21	22	19	19	12
Chase	6	7	5	11	4	4	7	6	7	9	15
Cherry	9	8	6	5	3	3	29	34	20	15	25
Cheyenne	23	14	20	18	16	30	25	34	19	28	25
Clay	26	23	25	27	36	37	24	15	10	10	18
Colfax	27	25	31	34	28	25	20	16	10	14	8
Cuming	42	41	41	44	50	46	37	31	21	24	30
Custer	30	29	32	39	33	41	43	34	24	18	29
Dakota	26	22	29	20	23	22	24	21	15	13	13
Dawes	54	47	37	25	32	39	42	46	41	25	40
Dawson	61	61	65	70	97	73	94	65	61	68	79
Deuel	9	5	8	4	13	16	12	12	14	14	17
Dixon	22	13	15	16	21	19	24	18	12	11	15
Dodge	35	44	36	30	52	31	37	18	14	23	16
Douglas	139	140	141	147	163	129	130	111	87	92	105
Dundy	13	8	9	10	6	9	15	21	18	14	10
Fillmore	18	14	13	12	17	17	19	10	8	7	6
Franklin	43	38	32	52	40	28	24	21	14	11	18
Frontier	14	22	16	15	14	29	17	21	22	24	27
Furnas	28	29	25	35	38	39	28	31	29	28	33
Gage	173	163	167	165	155	104	123	117	96	88	97
Garden	19	18	16	15	32	27	15	20	23	17	18
Garfield	5	5	9	4	5	8	5	3	4	2	0
Gosper	22	16	14	8	21	22	25	31	17	23	31
Grant	2	4	2	1	3	0	2	2	0	4	2
Greeley	8	13	6	6	10	12	6	7	5	10	9
Hall	61	72	83	73	82	93	99	66	57	47	60
Hamilton	73	69	64	67	75	61	66	49	40	28	54
Harlan	22	35	35	31	36	29	38	29	23	20	30
Hayes	9	4	7	8	11	5	2	5	2	2	5
Hitchcock	20	15	22	20	29	24	22	30	13	20	18
Holt	31	26	19	28	26	39	37	40	18	21	33
Hooker	5	2	0	0	4	2	6	3	1	4	2
Howard	34	32	37	36	45	45	40	40	41	33	40
Jefferson	93	83	116	109	123	111	91	70	65	65	61
Johnson	20	28	34	20	11	12	25	23	16	9	24
Kearney	21	33	26	25	31	25	41	26	24	22	19
Keith	41	34	29	51	60	50	68	55	45	49	35
Keya Paha	1	7	12	11	11	7	5	6	2	0	5
Kimball	4	11	5	6	9	12	13	17	17	15	16
Knox	20	22	25	21	28	30	16	13	13	19	21
Lancaster	222	323	275	250	277	230	258	199	160	150	196
Lincoln	74	86	117	107	109	121	124	98	96	110	116
Logan	8	8	7	4	7	11	4	1	3	4	7
Loup	4	3	5	12	7	6	2	3	1	1	2

**Nebraska Animal-Involved Crashes
By County
2005 - 2015**

County	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Madison	25	27	28	33	43	38	35	27	27	27	30
McPherson	3	0	5	2	4	3	2	2	2	0	2
Merrick	30	28	43	41	51	40	46	38	29	43	35
Morrill	33	39	24	39	54	57	54	57	41	44	50
Nance	16	19	12	19	24	14	16	19	14	16	10
Nemaha	38	42	37	30	36	35	23	29	18	22	19
Nuckolls	21	25	28	34	29	20	19	19	9	15	16
Otoe	36	43	43	50	49	44	60	40	29	37	46
Pawnee	43	23	19	19	21	18	20	17	7	17	16
Perkins	8	8	8	4	11	5	7	7	8	4	6
Phelps	10	14	15	22	15	12	17	14	15	11	22
Pierce	13	30	19	17	12	15	23	26	26	11	17
Platte	51	62	48	50	68	62	67	55	39	36	43
Polk	15	20	23	32	35	25	32	16	6	11	19
Red Willow	15	28	30	34	46	31	28	36	26	27	26
Richardson	30	47	35	31	46	29	34	18	19	18	26
Rock	6	10	9	7	6	10	16	15	7	5	8
Saline	77	88	93	87	85	84	65	54	40	40	48
Sarpy	128	132	149	119	146	124	133	66	92	84	105
Saunders	42	48	46	57	49	59	60	40	35	37	40
Scotts Bluff	56	80	93	63	81	111	105	94	95	61	77
Seward	92	83	75	98	81	99	82	53	41	46	60
Sheridan	16	28	25	18	25	29	24	25	25	22	20
Sherman	16	15	11	18	21	20	16	17	10	15	9
Sioux	11	13	4	5	5	4	5	7	5	4	6
Stanton	6	8	6	3	4	8	5	6	10	8	10
Thayer	29	33	42	33	37	52	31	45	28	20	30
Thomas	2	3	8	8	6	6	6	5	4	6	4
Thurston	19	23	21	18	24	12	14	14	12	7	9
Valley	17	17	17	13	18	15	13	9	9	5	8
Washington	108	108	96	117	114	124	114	95	88	78	71
Wayne	11	21	14	11	15	13	8	8	8	8	6
Webster	56	64	51	63	46	54	44	22	31	30	19
Wheeler	12	6	1	4	7	5	9	6	5	8	3
York	34	46	61	52	63	37	39	36	27	30	34
Total	3,170	3,488	3,381	3,410	3,734	3,497	3,507	2,921	2,398	2,337	2,709

Prepared by: Nebraska Office of Highway Safety, PO Box 94612, Lincoln, NE 68509

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Source: Standard Summary of Nebraska Motor Vehicle Traffic Accidents, NDOR - 2005 - 2015