

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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NOTE TO EDITORS: Attached are the five-year totals and 2015 county breakdown of crashes as reported to KDOT

Deer-vehicle crashes increase in fall

Mating season and the quest for more secure habitat have deer on the move at this time of year, increasing the chances of vehicle collisions.

Typically, the greatest number of deer-vehicle crashes is in mid-November when the rut, or mating season, peaks. In addition to the rut, deer are also on the move in mid-fall seeking new food sources and shelter as crops are harvested and leaves fall from trees and shrubs, leaving them less secure than in their summer habitats. Summer rains have added a new wrinkle, too.

“We have just experienced a summer rainfall pattern that has produced excellent growth of deer habitat,” said Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism biologist Lloyd Fox. “Unlike the years of drought, we should expect more fawns this fall. Young animals of all species are prone to making mistakes. That includes mistakes crossing roads. Be extra careful.”

According to the Kansas Department of Transportation, 9,982 (16 percent) of the 60,340 vehicle crashes reported in 2015 were deer-related (crashes in which a deer and vehicle actually collided or the presence of a deer was a contributing circumstance). Although crashes involving deer occur throughout the year in every Kansas county, the highest number of crashes typically occur where there are the most vehicles. Sedgwick

County had 374 deer-vehicle crashes in 2015, the most of any county, while Butler County followed with 356 deer-vehicle crashes.

The Kansas Highway Patrol cautions drivers to refrain from making exaggerated maneuvers to avoid a deer in the road, lest a bad situation become even worse.

“If you are unfortunate enough to have a deer enter the highway in front of your car, it is best to hit the animal and not swerve to avoid it,” said the KHP’s Lt. Adam Winters. “Often we find more serious crashes occur when you swerve to miss the deer, potentially losing control of your vehicle, leaving the road or veering into oncoming traffic.”

Other tips to avoid deer collisions include:

- Be especially watchful at dawn and dusk when deer are particularly active.
- Watch for more than one deer, as they seldom travel alone.
- Reduce speed and be alert near wooded areas or green spaces such as parks or golf courses and near water sources such as streams or ponds.
- Deer crossing signs show where high levels of deer/vehicle crashes have occurred in the past.
- Use your bright lights to help you detect deer as far ahead as possible.
- Always wear a seat belt and use appropriate child safety seats. Even if you are waiting in your car, it is best to wear your seat belt, and have your children in car seats.

If you do hit a deer, here are some additional tips:

- Slow down, pull onto the shoulder and turn on the emergency flashers.
- Don’t worry about the animal. Law enforcement will arrange to have the animal removed from the road when they arrive. Tell the dispatcher if the deer is still in the road when you’re calling for help.
- If possible, remain buckled up in your vehicle, protecting yourself in the event there is a secondary crash involving another vehicle.
- If you must be outside your vehicle, stand as far off the road as possible; make sure hazard lights are activated; don’t stand between your vehicle and another vehicle; and make sure children are kept properly restrained in your vehicle.

To report a crash on Kansas highways from a cellular phone, call *47 (*HP) for a highway patrol dispatcher or *582 (*KTA) for assistance on the Kansas Turnpike. The crash can also be reported by dialing 911.