

# Avoid Wildlife Collisions On The Highways

Elk, deer, bears and other animals on roadways present safety hazards to drivers.

October through December is an especially high-traffic time for wildlife moving from one part of their habitats to another while they breed and forage for food, although they can, and do, appear on roads throughout the year.

The Rocky Mountain Insurance Information Association reports that \$2,800 is the average cost per insurance claim on a vehicle involved in a collision with an animal.

## Colorado Statistics

Between 1995 and 2005 there were 30,245 animal-vehicle collisions on Colorado's roadways, according to the most recent statistics available from the Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT). Twenty nine of the crashes resulted in fatalities—2,505 resulted in injuries and 27,711 resulted in property damage.

A study by the Southern Rockies Ecosystem Project, funded by the Federal Highway Administration, examined 100 known linkages, or commonly traveled pathways, between animal habitats and found many cross Colorado roads. The study identified the following locations as being extremely hazardous for drivers and wildlife:

- I-70 at Floyd Hill/Mt. Vernon Canyon
- US 285 at Morrison
- **HWY 160, Durango to Pagosa Springs and Durango to Mancos**
- **HWY 550, North of Durango and Montrose to Ouray**
- I-25 Castle Rock to Larkspur
- HWY 82 Glenwood Springs to Marble
- HWY 36 Boulder to Lyons

- I-70 Eagle

For more information and statistics on wildlife/vehicle incidents visit the [CDOT wildlife website](#).



## Driver Safety Tips

The Colorado State Patrol says the most important thing drivers can do to protect themselves and wildlife is slow down. Drivers need to give themselves enough reaction time. Don't overdrive your lights; speeding diminishes the reaction time from when an animal first appear in your headlights. When drivers come upon an animal in the middle of the road, they should brake, not swerve. Other tips for drivers include being especially alert at dawn and dusk. When you see wildlife beside the road, slow down and pass carefully as they may suddenly bolt onto the road. Watch for the yellow wildlife warning signs that indicate an area of increased risk and slow down when traveling through these areas.

- Stay Alert. Avoid driving with other distractions.
- Slow Down to increase your reaction time.
- Scan Ahead and watch for movement along roadsides.
- Look for more animals after you see one animal - they often travel in groups.
- Brake. Don't Swerve.
- Be ready for animals to change direction.
- Don't litter - it attracts animals.
- Obey traffic signs, including wildlife warning and speed limit signs.
- Don't drink and drive.
- Watch for shining eyes.



At Night:

Use high beams to improve visibility when there's no oncoming traffic.

- Don't overdrive headlights.
- Slow down on blind curves.
- Pass with care.

## If You Hit an Animal

If you cannot stop in time it is usually safer to hit the animal than to swerve. Swerving may land you in the path of another car or off the road in a ditch.

Pull over and call the State Patrol (dial \*CSP from your cell phone in Colorado) or local law enforcement to report the accident. If the animal is still on the roadway, they can safely remove it.

If the animal is still alive, it may be dangerous for you to leave your vehicle.

If your vehicle is unsafe to operate or you are injured, stay in your car and wait for help.

Call your insurance agent at your earliest opportunity. If you carry optional comprehensive coverage it will cover damage caused by a collision with an animal.

Contact Colorado Parks and Wildlife (Durango Office: 970-247-0855) to obtain a permit to keep meat from a big game animal killed in a vehicle collision.