

It's the time of year again – shorter days, cooler temperatures, leaves falling from the trees, and deer crossing the road without looking both ways first.

Deer are plentiful and their movements unpredictable along Wisconsin roadways. To avoid hitting deer, drivers must be extremely cautious and vigilant, Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) officials warn. During their mating season in October and November, deer are more active, especially at dusk and dawn when they move to and from their bedding and feeding areas. As they roam, deer often will dart onto highways and directly into the path of vehicles.

Deer are the third most commonly struck object in Wisconsin traffic crashes, behind collisions with another vehicle or a fixed object. Nearly half of all reported crashes involve striking a deer.

To avoid deer crashes, drivers must slow down when they see deer in the area. If you see one deer, there are probably more nearby that could dash in front of your vehicle. If you can't avoid a deer, it's safer to hit the brakes and hit the deer than to swerve suddenly and try to miss it. If you swerve, you risk losing control of your vehicle and rolling over or hitting another car or a fixed object, like a tree.

Deer crashes are possible on most any road in Waushara County, including many village and city streets.

The WisDOT Bureau of Transportation Safety offers the following advice to prevent deer crashes:

- Be on the lookout for deer, eliminate distractions while driving, and slow down in early morning and evening hours—the most active time for deer.
- Always wear your safety belt—there are fewer and less severe injuries in vehicle-deer crashes when safety belts are worn.

Be cautious while driving during deer season

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- If you see a deer by the side of the road, slow down and blow your horn with one long blast to frighten the deer away.
- When you see one deer, look for another one—deer seldom run alone.
- If you see a deer looming in your headlights, don't expect the deer to move away—headlights can confuse a deer and cause the animal to freeze.
- Brake firmly when you notice a deer in or near your path.
- Do not swerve – it can confuse the deer as to where to run and cause you to lose control and hit a tree or another car.
- The one exception to the “don't swerve” advice applies to motorcyclists. On a motorcycle, you should slow down, brake firmly and then swerve if necessary to avoid hitting the deer. If you must swerve, always try to stay within your lane to avoid hitting other objects.
- If you hit a deer, get your vehicle off the road if possible, and then call a law enforcement agency. Walking on a highway is dangerous, so stay in your vehicle if you can.
- Don't try to move the animal if it is still alive. The injured deer could hurt you.

More information is available at www.dot.state.wi.us.