

DEER SAFETY



Motorists need to heighten their awareness of deer during the fall breeding season. Deer do not stop and look both ways when they cross a highway.

Collisions between deer and automobiles result in a substantial cost, including damage to vehicles, the loss of a valuable wildlife resource and human injuries or fatalities. As deer and human populations have grown in the metropolitan areas, this danger has become greater. Although no statistics are available regarding the combined property damage and personal injury loss resulting from deer/vehicle collisions in Fairfax County, property damage alone is enough for everyone to sit up and take notice.

Most accidents occur between dusk and dawn. Watch for deer where roads pass through wooded or rural areas. The most important thing drivers can do to reduce the chances of an accident with a deer is to drive the speed limit. In addition to our recommendations, here are some other tips to keep in mind as a driver.

-  Deer usually travel in groups and generally maintain a home range of about one square mile. If you see a deer cross the road, slow down and use caution. Often additional deer are out of view and more are likely to follow.
-  A deer standing calmly in a field may suddenly jump into the road. Anticipate the potential for this rapid change in posture.
-  Elevate your deer awareness at locations with deer crossing signs. Deer crossing signs indicate areas where heavily used deer trails cross roadways. Slow down and watch for the eye-shine of deer near the roadway edges.
-  Be especially aware during the morning and afternoon. Deer tend to be more active during the early morning hours and late afternoon hours year round. They are moving between evening feeding areas and daytime bedding sites.
-  Be especially cautious during seasons of high deer which are October to January during the breeding season, and May and June when yearlings are seeking new territories. In Spring, deer move as snow disappears and tend to gravitate near roadway shoulders for the first greening grass and remaining roadway salt.
-  Slow down to avoid hitting a deer, but do not swerve. This can cause you to lose control and strike another vehicle or to leave the highway and strike a tree or other object. Injuries to drivers and passengers increase when the vehicle swerves.



This document is available in an alternative format upon request. Please call the Fairfax County Police Department at 703-246-7562. TTY 703-204-2264. Allow seven working days for preparation of the material.



What do I do if a deer suddenly jumps in front of the car?

Of course every case is different, but there are a few things to consider if you find yourself in this situation. The most important thing to remember is to maintain control of your car. Apply the brakes in a controlled manner. Deer are quick and agile animals. It is more likely that they will leap out of your path than that you will be able to brake and steer around them. Most serious injuries occur when a driver skids out of control and leaves the road or, worst of all, swerves into oncoming traffic. Obviously these circumstances arise quickly allowing very little time to react. Try to think ahead. When you see a deer crossing sign, think about what you would do if you suddenly had a deer jump into the road. Mentally practice keeping a cool head and reacting in a controlled fashion. If it should happen one day you will be more likely to react appropriately.



In the event of an accident

Motorists and passengers involved should provide assistance to anyone injured. Do not attempt to remove a dead or injured deer from a busy roadway. Instead, contact Fairfax County Police Department, 9-1-1 for emergencies and 703-691-2131 for reporting a vehicle crash without injuries.

Reporting an Animal Carcass

If an animal carcass is found along or within a County-maintained road, please immediately contact

Disposal of Animal Carcasses in Fairfax County:
Animal Carcass on State Road: Regardless of size or type of animal, call VDOT at 703-383-8368.



**Working for Safer Streets
Fairfax County Police Department**