

Mating time is here, don't veer for deer

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SPRINGFIELD – Autumn brings shorter days, cooler temperatures and a new set of driving habits for Illinois motorists. The Illinois Department of Transportation and Illinois Department of Natural Resources warn drivers to be vigilant during mating season as deer will be more active and visible throughout the state. The risk for deer vs. vehicle crashes greatly increases in October, November and December, especially at dusk and dawn.



“Deer can dart in front of a vehicle in the blink of an eye,” said Illinois Transportation Secretary Randy Blankenhorn. “It’s instinctual to swerve out of the way, but in doing so, drivers could lose control of the vehicle and cause a more severe crash. If you’re attentive and watchful for deer encounters, these safety tips could make all the difference.”

Motorists are urged to follow these safe driving tips during mating season:

- Be aware of your surroundings and pay attention to deer crossing signs.
- Scan the sides of the road for eye shine – the reflection of headlights in the eyes.
- Slow down if you see deer. They travel in groups, so more are likely in the area.

- Prepare for the unexpected. Deer can stop in the middle of the road or double back.
- If a collision is inevitable, try to glance the vehicle off the deer and avoid swerving into the opposite lanes of traffic.

More safe driving tips can be viewed by clicking [here](#).

Approximately 40 to 45 (actually 41%) percent of crashes in Illinois involving deer in 2016 occurred in October, November, and December – with November being the highest-risk month. 75 percent of all motor vehicle crashes involving deer happened in rural environments, with over 70 (actually 72%) percent of all crashes taking place at twilight or nighttime.

In 2016, there were 14,759 motor vehicle crashes involving deer in Illinois, over one thousand crashes less than the 2015 total. There were 14,248 crashes that resulted in damage to property or vehicles only, down from the 15,431 in 2015. Personal injuries tallied 581 in 2016 versus 628 in 2015 and 569 in 2014. The number of fatalities dropped, from eight in 2015 to five in 2016.

The top 10 Illinois counties for crashes involving deer in 2016:

- 1. Cook 439**
- 2. Madison 415**
- 3. Will 389**
- 4. Sangamon 344**
- 5. Fulton 328**
- 6. Peoria 311**
- 7. Williamson 287**
- 8. Rock Island 278**
- 9. Bureau 277**
- 10. Jackson 273**

“Deer-vehicle accidents can occur any time of year, but deer are especially active in the fall during their mating season,” said Wayne Rosenthal, director of the Illinois Department of Natural Resources. “Motorists should be on the alert for deer near roadways during early morning and evening hours, especially near wooded areas, field edges and waterways.”

If you do hit a deer, pull off to the shoulder and turn on the hazard lights. Call 911 to report the accident so the appropriate law enforcement can assist. Do not get out of the vehicle to check on an injured deer or pull it from the road. You can visit the IDNR [website](#) for information on how to claim a deer that has been involved in a crash.