

Driving and Wildlife safety

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REPORTER

In a case of wildlife vs vehicle, wildlife is on the losing end, but in some cases injuries and even death result for those in the vehicle.

According to Office of Traffic Safety Alberta Transportation In 2008, about 10 per cent of reported vehicle collisions involved animals, mostly wildlife, and resulted in 498 injuries and nine fatalities.

Some species are more active at dawn and dusk, especially deer, elk and moose during the mating season, such as the fall and winter months.

Driving visibility may be reduced and traffic volume can be high during this same time period.

In the past five years, about one-third of collisions involving animals occurred between 7 and 11 p.m.

Highway's such as Highway 3 can have a

harmful effect on wildlife populations, as well as pose a safety issue for people driving the roads.

In terms of wildlife, the highway may limit wildlife movement; reduce useable habitat; or cause wildlife death due to collision with vehicles.

According to the website Roadwatch, the mortality data from areas such as the Pass indicates that approximately 200 large mammals are killed in vehicle collisions a year.

That is probably a low estimate, as it only includes animals that were picked up by Alberta Transportation or Alberta Fish and Wildlife.

"It's very predictable, the increase in wildlife fatalities always seems to occur this time of year," said Paul Oss, communications advisor for Alberta Transportation.

According to Regional Traffic Safety Coordi-

nator, Kevin Brandvold a lot of these collisions could be avoided if people just paid better attention to their surroundings.

"Don't get me wrong there are situations where even if you are paying attention, these accidents will happen, but a lot of it is people not observing speed limits and not paying attention to what is going on around them," said Brandvold.

"But fall is mating season, add to that hunters have a lot of the wildlife on the move, so there tends to be more wildlife on our roadways this time of year. So people need to really pay attention this time of year."

"This trend will probably continue until mid to late December, so people need to be aware and take precautions when they drive through areas where wildlife is known to be," said Brandvold.

Here are quick tips for avoiding collisions with wildlife.

- Pay attention to

wildlife warning signs and adjust your speed accordingly.

- Reduce speed at dawn or dusk, especially on unfamiliar rural roads near water or lined with trees.

- Slow down in a curve, when reaching the crest of a hill or in wildlife-populated areas.

- Use high beams whenever possible. Deer's eyes will glow when they catch light but larger animals such as moose may not be as easy to see.

- Remember that, at night, lights from oncoming traffic make it difficult to see an animal on the road.

- Improve visibility by keeping the vehicle's windshield and headlights clean.

There are a number of precautions to take if you see wildlife on the road.

- Look for more than one animal - some species travel in groups.

- Brake firmly if an

animal is in the vehicle's path but avoid swerving.

However, if a large animal such as a moose is in your path and you cannot stop in time consider swerving in a safe direction.

A collision with a moose, which can weigh up to 500 kg (1,200 lbs) represents a high risk of injury or death to motorists and passengers.

- Honk in a series of short bursts to encourage animals to move out of the way.

If you are involved in an animal collision:

- report collisions to your insurance company and police service;

- contact the nearest Sustainable Resource Development office in cases where an animal is injured or poses a threat to public safety (dial 310-0000 for nearest office); and

- call the nearest regional Transportation office at 310-0000 to have road kill removed.