

Indiana Department of Natural Resources
Division of Fish & Wildlife

Deer-Vehicle Collisions and You

Annually, there are more than 14,000 deer-vehicle collisions reported in Indiana. If you live where deer are abundant, such as in suburban areas, or anywhere that field and forest meet, it is important to know what preventive measures you can take to reduce the likelihood of a collision and what to do if you are involved in one. While you can't eliminate the possibility of running into a deer on the road, you can minimize the risk of severe damage to you or your vehicle.

When do deer-vehicle collisions happen most often?

Deer movements are not entirely random. Your chance of seeing deer wandering across roads differs depending on the time of day and the time of year. Your chance of actually hitting a deer also depends on the unique circumstances of the situation. Be especially careful when driving during these conditions:

- At dawn and dusk. Deer are most active during these times of day while they forage for food.
- During the autumn "rut," or mating season, when bucks search for estrous does and fight other bucks they encounter. Deer are so distracted by mating prospects that they are less cautious than usual when crossing roads.
- When driving through areas with high deer densities, such as suburbs, or near areas where hunting is prohibited (state and national parks, nature preserves, and wildlife sanctuaries).
- When roads or conditions are unfavorable. Be especially mindful of deer when weather conditions are foggy, wet or icy; give yourself as much stopping time as possible.
- When deer or other wildlife are visible from the road. Other drivers may suddenly brake to take advantage of the viewing opportunity.
- When drivers pull over on a narrow shoulder to illegally harvest antlers from a road-killed deer. They may be too distracted in their attempt to quickly snag a trophy to move their vehicle completely out of the road.



Suburban areas often support high deer populations. Deer that are accustomed to human activity are less likely to avoid roads and traffic.

How can you prevent injuries from accidents?

- NEVER swerve to avoid hitting a deer. Brake and hit the deer if you must. You are far less likely to be injured by hitting a deer directly than by swerving off the road or into oncoming traffic to avoid hitting one.
- When you see one deer there are probably more, and they often follow each other, especially if one starts to run. If you see one near the road, slow down and watch for more.
- Observe general driving safety laws. Maintain your vehicle's lights, brakes and tires. Wear your seatbelt at all times. Observe the posted speed limit. Don't drive too closely behind other cars.
- Adjust your headrest to a proper height to prevent whiplash if you are in an accident. The top of the head restraint should be level with or above the top of your head.
- Slow down and pay attention. Don't waste money on novelties like deer whistles – studies show that are ineffective at deterring deer. The best way to avoid an accident is to be alert.

What to do if you hit a deer

1. Move your vehicle to a safe place if possible. Pull to the side of the road if you can and turn on your hazard lights.
2. Call the police. If there are no other vehicles involved and the driver and passengers are unharmed, a shortened report can probably be made. If the deer is still alive, don't approach it yourself; wounded deer are unpredictable and can be dangerous. Let the police officer approach and euthanize the deer if necessary.
3. You have the right to keep the deer for your own use with the proper permit. A police officer, conservation officer, district biologist, DNR property manager, or assistant DNR property manager can all issue permits for you to legally possess the deer. Refer to the [list of licensed Indiana deer processors](#) if you need a place to take your deer for butchering. Also consider donating the meat to a food bank. Participating processors will take deer for donation at no cost to the donor. The [Sportman's Benevolence Fund](#) covers the cost of butchering and ensures that the meat goes to those in need. Keep in mind that it is illegal to sell most wildlife parts in Indiana, including wild venison.
4. As with any vehicle accident, follow the officer's instructions. After the report is finished you will be free to go.



The Sportsman's Benevolence Fund pays the processing fees for deer that are donated to food shelters.