



Nearly 2 million deer make up Michigan's deer herd.

Deer are most active from April through June and

from October through December. During those months, most vehicle-deer crashes take place, although such crashes are a year-round problem.

In 2021, more than 50,000 vehicle-deer crashes occurred across Michigan in rural, suburban, and city settings. About 80 percent of those crashes were on two-lane roads. Because deer are most active at dawn and dusk, it is not surprising that most traffic crashes involving deer happen from 5 a.m. to 8 a.m. and 5 p.m. to 10 p.m.

Reminder

Motorists must slow down and move over when approaching emergency responders, tow trucks, and highway maintenance vehicles, including crews removing animal remains.

Remember to buckle up. Seat belts are a motorist's best defense in the event of a traffic crash.



P.O. Box 30634
Lansing, MI 48909
517-284-3332
Michigan.gov/ohsp

This material was developed through a project funded by the Michigan Office of Highway Safety Planning and the U.S. Department of Transportation.

Don't Veer for Deer



Watch for Deer All Year

Avoiding Deer

A vehicle crash with a large animal can be just as destructive as one with another vehicle. The most serious vehicle-deer traffic crashes occur when drivers veer to avoid the animal and hit another vehicle or a fixed object such as a tree or the vehicle rolls over.

- ◇ Stay alert, awake, aware, and sober, and drive at safe speeds.
- ◇ Notice where deer crossing signs are posted, which alert drivers of the possible presence of deer.
- ◇ Be aware of your surroundings, and be prepared for deer to dash out in front of you.
- ◇ Scan the roadside while driving, especially woodlots, fencerows, field edges, and areas near water, which deer use for feeding.
- ◇ Slow down. Be prepared to stop if deer are near the road. If a deer stops and stays on the road, do not try to go around it.
- ◇ Deer typically follow one another in single file, so if you see one deer, there are likely more nearby.
- ◇ Use high-beam headlights and additional driving lights to see the road better.
- ◇ Look for the reflection of headlights in a deer's eyes and deer silhouettes on the shoulder of the road.



Possession of Game Killed in a Traffic Crash

The Michigan Department of Natural Resources requires a person involved in a vehicle-deer crash to obtain a free Michigan Roadside Salvage Permit to possess the game unintentionally killed in the crash.



Motorists

- ◇ Always wear your seat belt, and make sure your passengers wear their seat belts.

If a crash is unavoidable...

- ◇ Do not veer! It is instinct to do this, but trying to avoid a deer may cause a loss of control of the vehicle and a more serious traffic crash.
- ◇ Brake firmly, and try to stay in your lane.
- ◇ Hold the steering wheel with both hands, and bring your vehicle to a controlled stop.

Motorcyclists

- ◇ Cover the brakes to reduce reaction time.
- ◇ Avoid riding at night and during dawn and dusk, the peak hours of deer movement.
- ◇ If riding in a group, spread out in a staggered formation. If one rider hits a deer, it will lessen the chances that other riders will be involved.
- ◇ A rider's best response when approaching a deer is to use both brakes for maximum braking. Keep your eyes and head up to improve your chances of keeping the bike upright.

If a crash is unavoidable...

- ◇ Use both brakes progressively, and come to a quick complete stop. If stopping is not an option, then without using brakes, swerve in the opposite direction the deer was heading, and slow down or come to a complete stop.



What to Do if You Hit a Deer

Motorists

- ◇ Turn on your emergency flashers, stay buckled up, and move your vehicle to the shoulder of the road if you can. If you cannot drive your vehicle and it is still in the line of traffic, carefully exit the vehicle, and stand at the side of the road out of the way of oncoming traffic.

Motorcyclists

- ◇ If you can, remove your bike from the road. Get yourself to a safe place away from the road and oncoming traffic.

Motorists and Motorcyclists

- ◇ Call the police to report the vehicle-deer crash. Be prepared to tell them:
 - Your location.
 - If there are any injuries to you and/or your passengers.
 - If other vehicles have also been involved.
 - If you think the deer is alive or dead and if it is blocking the road.
- ◇ Stay away from the deer. A wounded, frightened deer could be dangerous.
- ◇ After help arrives and if possible, document the incident, damage, and injuries in photographs.
- ◇ Do not assume your vehicle is safe to drive. Look for damage. Be prepared to call for a tow truck.
- ◇ Call your insurance company to report the vehicle-deer crash. You may need a police report number to start your claim.