

Deer crashes continue to rise in North Carolina

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(PhysOrg.com) -- Motor vehicles crashes involving deer rose to an all-time high in North Carolina in 2008, even as the total number of motor-vehicle crashes and total vehicle miles driven dropped from the previous year.

A new study from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill found that crashes reported to police involving deer last year on roadways in the state increased to 19,693, up from 19,277 in 2007. In that same period, total reported crashes fell from 224,307 in 2007 to 214,358 in 2008. Vehicle miles traveled also dropped, by 2 percent.

“Deer crashes continue to be a growing concern for motorists in North Carolina,” said David Harkey, director of the UNC [Highway Safety Research Center](#). “In five years, since 2004, we’ve seen a 27 percent increase in deer-related crashes, while total crashes during the same period decreased by 7 percent.”

Of the total reported automobile crashes in North Carolina in 2008, deer were cited as a factor in 9.2 percent, up from 8.6 percent in 2007. Wake County topped the list with 1084 deer-related crashes. Other counties with high numbers of deer crashes in 2008 include Guilford, Rockingham, Duplin, Pitt and Mecklenburg.

While a crash involving a deer can happen at any time, drivers should be particularly careful both in the early morning hours and the early evening hours, Harkey said. Almost 80 percent of deer-related crashes in 2008

occurred between 6 p.m. and 6 a.m.

White-tailed deer can be seen on the move around North Carolina roadways at any time of year. However, 50 percent of all deer-related crashes occurred during the three months of October, November and December. Deer are particularly restless and agitated during these months due to mating season and locating new food resources, Harkey said.

He also noted that while the figures reflect the total number of deer-related crashes reported to law enforcement agencies, there is anecdotal evidence that many more such crashes occur than are reported.

The UNC Highway Safety Research Center offers the following tips for lowering the risk of a crash with a deer.

- Slow down. In areas with a large deer population, or where there are deer warning signs, drivers should reduce their speed.
- Always wear a seat belt. It offers the best protection from injuries in the event of a crash.
- Watch for eyes reflecting from headlights. Try to look far down the road and scan the roadsides, especially when driving through field edges, heavily wooded areas or posted deer crossing areas. The sooner you see a deer on or approaching a road, the better the chances of avoiding a crash.
- Remember that deer travel in herds. If one deer crosses the road in front of you, don't assume that all is clear. Deer herds can be fairly large, and the animals often move one right behind the other.
- Do not place confidence in "deer whistles" or other "ultra-sonic" devices that claim to prevent [deer](#) collisions.
- Maintain control of your vehicle. It is important not to lose control of your vehicle or veer into the path of an oncoming vehicle to avoid contact with an animal. Loss of control usually results in a more serious

crash.

The complete deer-motor vehicle crash data for all North Carolina counties is available at www.hsrb.org/safety_info/all_vehicle/index.cfm .

Provided by University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

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