

Roe deer more likely to be run over at nightfall on a Sunday in April

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The European roe deer is the smallest Eurasian specie of deer . Credit: Unicoletti

Traffic accidents involving wildlife are on the rise in Europe. The establishment of a time pattern for the accidents could be useful for increasing safety and preventing human and animal deaths. On the basis of this objective, a team of researchers have established at what time, on what day of the week and in which month accidents involving boar and roe deer are most likely to take place.

[Car accidents](#) involving animals are a serious and growing problem in Europe. They pose a risk for human life and may result in mortal victims, damage to vehicles and the loss of wildlife.

Specifically, in [Galicia](#) the time distribution of the accidents varies according to the month, the day of the week and even the time of day.

This is the main conclusion of a study published in the *European Journal of Wildlife Research* by a team of researchers from the AF4 group from the School of Forest Engineering at the University of Vigo.

Wild boar are the cause of 63% of [traffic accidents](#) involving wild ungulates, and roe deer come second, in 37% of the accidents. The researchers analysed a database of 6,255 accidents of this type.

"Drivers must understand that many roads pass through the habitats of these species, and that it is necessary to reduce speed, especially in certain seasons or at certain times of the day," as explained to SINC by Laura Lagos, main author of the study. "[Road traffic](#) managers are also responsible for signposting the sections of the road at greatest risk".

Two periods can be distinguished in the year with a higher probability of accident, varying according to the species, but not linked to [human factors](#) such as the annual volume of traffic.

Accidents involving roe deer occur more frequently between April and July, particularly in April and May. "This is the season in which the young roe deer born in the previous year are expelled from the group and start to look for a new territory," explains Lagos. However in July, accidents are probably linked to the mating season.

On the other hand, accidents involving wild boar tend to take place between October and January. "Nights are longer during these months, and therefore the probability is higher as they are nocturnal animals," adds Lagos. In addition, in these months, which coincide with the hunting season, the beaters chase the animals away and they often cross the roads in Galicia".

The risk is greater on Sundays

The number of accidents also increases at weekends, especially on Sundays, due to the increase in the volume of night-time traffic. In the hunting season, the accident rate is higher on Sundays.

The frequency of accidents during the day is linked to the activity of the species. [Wild boar](#) are nocturnal and [roe deer](#) are more active at dawn and nightfall, which is reflected in the distribution of the accidents.

As well as making drivers more aware of and signposting the more dangerous sections, Lagos believes that "the creation of GPS- and mobile phone-based systems to warn drivers as they approach risk zones may be a more efficient system in Galicia and in the rest of Europe. We are working on this project together with the GEODEM spin-off".

More information: Lagos, L., Picos, J. and Valero, E. Temporal pattern of wild ungulate-related traffic accidents in northwest Spain. *European Journal of Wildlife Research*. 2012. [DOI 10.1007/s10344-012-0614-6](#)

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