

Press Release

October 2016

Motorists warned to watch for deer in mating season

Highways England and The Deer Initiative have joined forces to warn motorists about the heightened risk of collisions involving deer at this time of year.

Across the UK it is estimated that there could be up to 74,000 deer-related motor vehicle accidents this year alone, resulting in 400 to 700 human injuries and 20 deaths. The combined economic impact of injury accidents and car damage is likely to exceed £50 million a year.

October through to December is considered a high-risk period as deer will be on the move for the autumn mating season, also known as the rut. The highest risk of a deer-vehicle collision is between sunset and midnight, and the hours shortly before and after sunrise.

Tony Sangwine, Senior Principal Environmental Adviser at Highways England said: "Our top priority is safety – that is why we are working with the Deer Initiative to warn motorists about these particular risks. Deer are highly active at this time of the year, meaning they can suddenly appear on the road, at both dawn and dusk.

"With most deer movement coinciding with key commuting hours, we are urging drivers to be more aware so that they can complete their journeys on our roads safely and without incident."

Some 1.5million deer live wild in the UK. There are six main species.

Highways England's advice to drivers is:

- When you see deer warning signs or are travelling through a heavily wooded or forested stretch of road, check your speed and stay alert.
- If your headlights are on, use full-beams when you can; but dip them if you see deer, as they may 'freeze'.
- More deer may follow the first one you see.

- Be prepared to stop. Try not to suddenly swerve to avoid a deer. Hitting oncoming traffic or another obstacle could be even worse.
- If you have to stop, use your hazard warning lights.
- Do not approach an injured deer – it could be dangerous.

If you need to report a deer vehicle collision or to find out more on safety advice please visit www.deeraware.com The Deer Aware website exists to offer basic advice on how to avoid a collision and to collect data on the number of accidents.

Our research is the only national effort to collect data that could be used to save lives - the information you submit is an essential part of this important effort.

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Notes for editors:

The Deer Initiative

The Deer Initiative is a broad partnership of statutory, voluntary and private sector interests dedicated to 'ensuring the delivery of a sustainable wild deer population in England and Wales' (www.thedeerinitiative.co.uk). The Partners include such diverse organisations as Highways England, the RSPCA, and the RSPB. All the members of the Partnership abide by the principles of the Deer Accord and encourage others to share their commitment and priorities as an integral part of their management of deer.

The DI will be using social media to spread the message and share tips about being Deer Aware.

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/DeerInitiative>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/DeerAwareUK>

For further details contact our Media Officer:

E-mail: media@thedeerinitiative.co.uk

Website: www.thedeerinitiative.co.uk

Highways England.

Highways England is the government owned company responsible for managing, operating and modernising England's motorways and major A roads.

For further information please contact Highways England's press office: 0844 693 1448 or email pressoffice@highwaysengland.co.uk

Deer Aware www.deeraware.com

Road traffic accidents involving deer present a major problem in the UK as well as in many other countries in Europe. For example, in Germany over 220,000 traffic collisions occur annually involving deer, over 1000 of which lead to human injuries and around 20 human fatalities.

In the UK there is no system for central collation of road traffic accidents involving deer or other wildlife, and firm statistics on the scale of the problem in this country remain unavailable.

However, a pilot survey commissioned by the Highways Agency in 1997 based on retrospective data estimated that the number of deer killed annually in traffic collisions in the UK was already between 30,000 and 40,000.

A fuller study started in 2003, again with lead funding from the Highways Agency, based on sample data collected annually from a range of organisations and individuals; this reaffirms that the annual number of deer killed or injured on UK roads is likely to exceed 40,000 and may well be nearer 74,000. Further information on the findings of the studies available in:

http://www.deercollisions.co.uk/ftp/DI%20England%20Monitoring%20DVCs%20to%202010/DI-DVC_England2011_Summwfigs_rev.pdf