



# Road Traffic Accidents Involving Deer



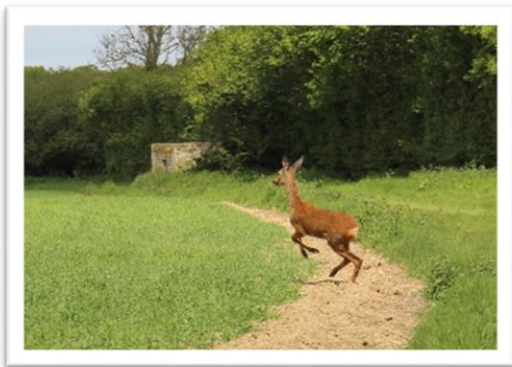
Recent research indicates that up to 74,000 deer may be involved in vehicle collisions each year in Britain.

Six species of deer live in the wild in Britain with a combined population of over a million. Increases in deer numbers and their distribution - particularly in urban and peri-urban areas - combined with a rise in the volume of traffic, are resulting in a large number of road traffic accidents each year.

This is a major animal welfare problem and incurs significant human costs as well; it is estimated that between up to 20 people could be killed and hundreds more injured every year as a result of accidents involving deer, either through direct collisions or swerving to avoid deer. The cost of damage to vehicles alone is estimated to be at least £17 million.

Each year over 10,000 deer may be severely injured but not killed instantly when hit by vehicles. They may suffer for prolonged periods until someone can attend to humanely dispatch them. Some manage to move away from the roadside but may die later as a result of their injuries.

In England the three most common species involved are fallow (40 per cent), roe (32 per cent) and muntjac (25 per cent). Accidents happen throughout the year but there is a peak during May when young roe bucks are dispersing and another from October through to January associated with the increased movement of deer around the rut, and shorter daylight hours. The risks increase when rush hours coincide with peaks in deer activity around dawn and dusk.



## What can you do?

### WHEN YOU'RE DRIVING, REDUCE THE RISK OF DEER COLLISIONS BY:

- Taking note of deer warning signs.
- Staying alert for deer, even in areas with no warning signs, and particularly in heavily wooded areas where you may not see them coming.
- Keeping your speed down. It's 'forty for a reason' in areas like the New Forest and Ashdown Forest.
- Taking extra care during the high-risk periods of early morning and early evening.
- Taking extra care throughout May and from October to January. It is during these periods that the national peaks in deer related traffic collisions occur.
- Being aware that further deer may cross after the ones you notice.
- Using headlights on high beam if there is no oncoming traffic. This will make deer easier to see by illuminating the eyes of any on the road BUT then dip the beams once you see them otherwise they may freeze and stay in the road.
- Trying to come to a stop as far in front of the deer as you can. This will mean the deer, as well as any others with it can leave the roadside without panic or distress.

**Always report any deer-vehicle collisions to the police and try to remember to record the incident at:**

[www.deeraware.com](http://www.deeraware.com)

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## What is being done?

The Deer Initiative, a broad partnership of statutory and voluntary organisations (including the RSPCA) founded the **UK National Deer-Vehicle Collisions Project**. Started in 2003 and funded by the Highways Agency and other bodies, this was the first national study aimed at recording detailed information about deer-related accidents.

The information gathered by the Deer Aware project is being used to identify high-risk areas and key factors associated with collisions. Efforts can then be targeted at hot-spots. For example, evidence from Deer Aware indicates that around 80 per cent of deer-related vehicle collisions in the UK occur in England, with the highest numbers recorded in the South East, where traffic levels are highest.

In isolation, mitigation measures have been shown to be moderately effective, however research by the Deer Commission for Scotland indicates that in order to be truly effective, these measures need to be used together. The [Deer Collisions website](#) has a detailed breakdown of mitigation techniques including fencing, over/underpasses, optical warning reflectors, acoustic warning devices, chemical deterrents, vehicle mounted whistles, improved signage techniques, verge clearance and the reduction of deer densities. In this way the advantages and disadvantages of each method can be seen and the best methods for specific situations or locations can be identified.

Some mitigation methods are very recent and as yet no research has been produced on their efficacy. One such example is "in-vehicle deer-detection systems", in which the driver is alerted to the presence of deer on the road ahead. Whilst this method promises to be highly effective, it has been criticised for its expense. It is also thought that such a system could be distracting to the driver, or that false-positives may habituate the driver to the alert over time.

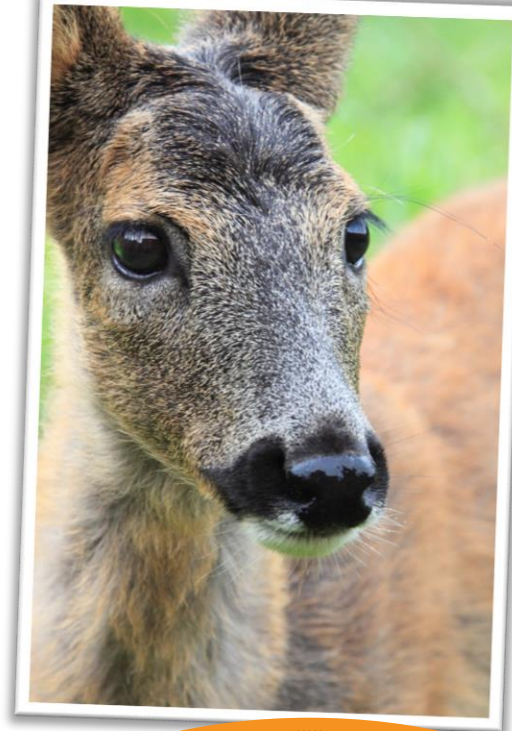
The project data has also been used in improving public awareness of the issues, allowing the Deer Initiative and partner organisations to coincide media releases with annual peaks in the number of deer related collisions (late autumn and spring). The most effective solution will be to tailor local prevention strategies in partnership with road authorities and forest/deer managers.

## What is the RSPCA doing to help?

The RSPCA receives over a thousand calls each year regarding deer accidents and we attend, or arrange for someone else to do so, in order to alleviate suffering.

The Society is a major source of information for the deer collisions project and have supplied details of tens of thousands of incidents since the project started.

We have also helped publicise the issue to increase general awareness, with press releases attracting substantial coverage in national and regional news media.



**In 2009, Deer Aware was launched as a campaign aimed at educating and influencing road users.**

The website contains detailed information as well as a function for reporting incidents of deer related collisions.

[www.deeraware.com](http://www.deeraware.com)

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## Further information

### **RSPCA - Deer**

[www.rspca.org.uk/adviceandwelfare/wildlife/animals/deer](http://www.rspca.org.uk/adviceandwelfare/wildlife/animals/deer)

### **National Deer-Vehicle Collisions Project**

[www.deercollisions.co.uk](http://www.deercollisions.co.uk)

### **The Deer Initiative**

[www.thedeerinitiative.co.uk](http://www.thedeerinitiative.co.uk)

### **British Deer Society**

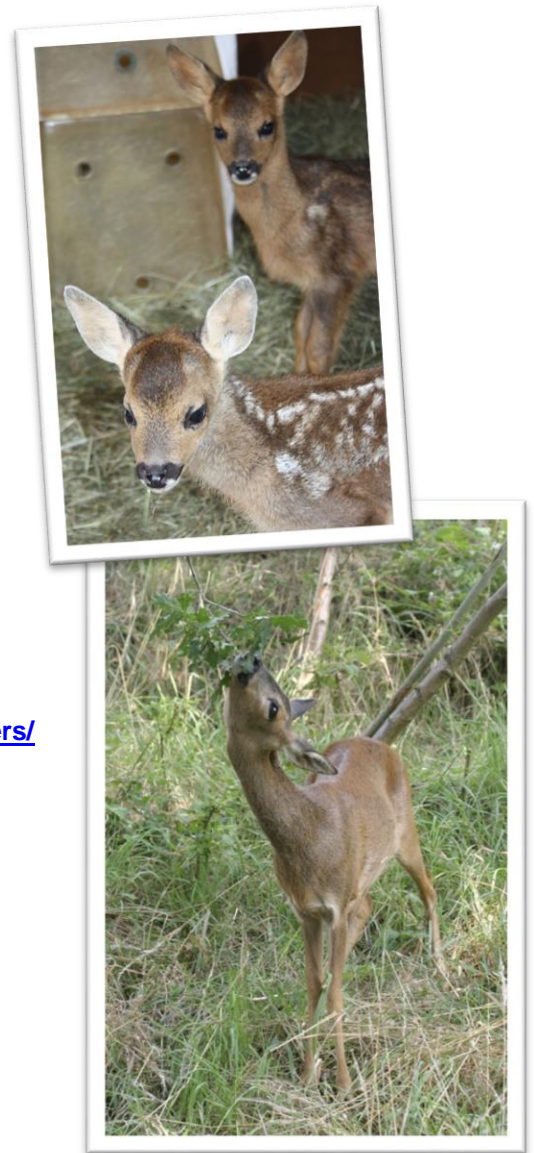
<https://bds.org.uk/information-advice/issues-with-deer/advice-for-drivers/>

### **Deer Aware**

[www.deeraware.com](http://www.deeraware.com)

### **The AA - Deer Collisions**

[www.theaa.com/driving-advice/safety/deer-collisions](http://www.theaa.com/driving-advice/safety/deer-collisions)



To report an injured or sick deer to the RSPCA, please ring the cruelty and advice line on **0300 1234 999**