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## Watch out for Wildlife

According to the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS), insurance claims for animal-related collisions rise in the fall. An estimated 1.5 million deer-vehicle accidents occur each year costing approximately 1 billion in vehicle damage annually. In the last five years, CTSI has paid out for 216 such claims. While most of the accidents involved deer, a turkey, bear, coyote, badger, and cow accounted for some of those accidents. Motor vehicle accidents involving wildlife are the third leading cause of crashes behind speeding and inattentive driving. In 2015, 186 people were killed in animal-related crashes.

In Colorado and nationwide, November sees the most wildlife-related auto accidents because with shorter days and the Daylight Savings time change, people are commuting to and from work during dawn and dusk, a time when many big game animals like deer are most active. Deer are also a bigger hazard this time of year because it is their mating season making them more mobile, easily distracted, and more likely to cross roadways.

### Driving Tips

While it is not always possible to avoid driving during peak times of wildlife activity, there are steps you can take to avoid collisions.

- Slow down – driving slowly gives you more time to react and avoid a collision in case an animal runs in front of your vehicle.
- Stay alert – stay focused on the road, especially when driving at dawn or dusk.
- Brake, don't swerve – swerving to avoid an animal puts you at risk of losing control or hitting another car. It may also confuse the animal as to which way to go. Instead brake as quickly and safely as possible.
- Scan ahead – watch for movement at the side of

the roads. At night look for the shine of eyes reflected in headlights. If you see one animal, expect there to be more.

- Obey traffic signs – pay attention to wildlife crossing signs that warn of highly traveled areas of the road.
- Buckle up – wearing your seatbelt is the best way to protect yourself during a crash. A IIHS study found that 60% of people killed in animal-related collisions were not wearing their seatbelts.

### Dangerous Highways

You never know where you might encounter wildlife crossing a roadway. Pay particular attention when driving through forests and agricultural areas where wildlife is prevalent. The Colorado Parks & Wildlife service has identified the following roads as high-risk areas for wildlife-related auto accidents:

- Interstate 70 (Floyd Hill, Mt. Vernon Canyon and Eagle)
- US 285 (Morrison)
- Highway 160 (Durango to Pagosa Springs and Durango to Mancos)
- Highway 550 (north of Durango and from Montrose to Ouray)
- Interstate 25 (Castle Rock to Larkspur)
- Highway 82 (Glenwood Springs to Aspen)
- Highway 36 (Boulder to Lyons)
- Highway 93 (Golden to Boulder)

### What This Means for Counties

Keep an eye out for wildlife while driving, especially in the Fall. For more information about claims or driver safety, contact CTSI at (303) 861 0507. 