

Vehicle-Animal Collisions

2.4 million vehicle-deer collisions.*
One vehicle-deer collision every 26 seconds.
\$5 - 8 billion in damage every year.

In a recent five-year span, there were over 2,000 reported vehicle-animal collisions in Nevada, including nearly 1,500 collisions involving deer. Research estimates that more than 50 percent of such collisions go unreported to authorities, pointing to a potentially higher number of animal-related incidents.

The monetary costs of such animal-vehicle collisions are high. Across the nation, traffic crashes involving wildlife cause an estimated \$5 to \$8 billion in damage each year.

The substantial human, economic and wildlife costs caused by vehicle-animal collisions have led scientists and engineers to develop tools to reduce the deadly crashes. One of those tools, wildlife crossings (a type of safety crossing), has been successful at reducing both vehicle-animal collisions and wildlife impacts caused by roads.



Safety Crossing - U.S. 93 near Wells

* In the U.S.- July 2007-June 2009. State Farm® estimates, http://www.statefarm.com/about/media/media_releases/20090928.asp

Safety Crossings

Animal safety crossings are passages above or beneath roadways that are designed to increase road safety and reduce collisions by redirecting wildlife out of the way of oncoming traffic.

From underpasses and overpasses to small mammal tunnels and other crossings, these structures provide semi-natural corridors through which animals can safely cross roads without endangering motorists and themselves. Often, safety crossings for larger animals are installed in conjunction with fencing to help direct animals to cross at the desired location, avoiding potential traffic collisions.

Benefits

- Help prevent human and animal injuries and deaths caused by vehicle-animal collisions and drivers swerving to miss an animal.
- Help reduce costs of vehicle, property and infrastructure damage caused by vehicle-animal collisions and crashes caused by drivers swerving to miss an animal.
- Preserve healthy wildlife populations by reducing animal deaths and injury caused while crossing roads.
- Preserve access to natural wildlife habitat and migration corridors for wildlife.
- Foster wildlife biodiversity and reduce habitat fragmentation which hinders genetic diversity and health among wild animal populations.

History

Safety crossings are becoming increasingly common in the United States and Canada, reducing vehicle-animal collisions and allowing safe crossing of deer and elk in Arizona, mountain goats and grizzly bears in Montana, deer, elk and moose in Wyoming and desert tortoises in California and Nevada.

In Nevada, the Nevada Departments of Transportation and Wildlife, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Transportation, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and other partners, are working together to install safety crossings in areas shown by research to have high vehicle-animal collision rates.

Driving Safety

Like all technology, safety crossings cannot provide protection in every circumstance.

Always follow these important safety tips:

- Obey all speed limits and traffic signs and regulations.
- Wear seatbelts.
- Limit distractions while driving.
- Drive defensively.
- Heed animal warning signs. Be aware and alert for the potential presence of wildlife, particularly in areas where wildlife warning signs are posted.
- Actively scan all sides and areas of the road as you drive for any signs of wildlife.
- Adjust driving speeds if necessary to help reduce the chance and impact of an animal collision.
- Remember that many accidents are not due to colliding with wildlife but are the result of driving into another car or truck in the opposite lane while trying to avoid colliding with the animal.
- Herd animals such as deer and elk travel in groups. If you see one deer, there is strong likelihood that others may be nearby or in other locations along the road.
- Use your vehicle's high beams at night, early morning hours or in other dark lighting conditions to view the roadway ahead.
- Be aware that animals are most likely to move at dusk and dawn.



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www.nevadadot.com/safetycrossing
www.ndow.org

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Nevada Wildlife Populations



Scientists estimate that U.S. roads impact the natural ecology of at least one-fifth of the country. These roads increase animal deaths, fragment and decrease habitat, prevent wildlife from accessing natural resources and isolate wildlife populations into smaller and more vulnerable subpopulations.

Here are a few key wildlife species in Nevada that can greatly benefit from wildlife crossings.

Mule Deer

Mule deer typify the wild and natural character of the Great Basin better than any other animal. Mule deer are one of the most economically and socially important animals in western North America. Unfortunately, mule deer habitats are facing unprecedented threats from a wide variety of human-related disturbances.

Elk

Elk are one of the largest of the deer, or cervid, species, standing five feet at the shoulder. Today, elk herds are found throughout northeastern Nevada and even outside of Las Vegas. Elk infrequently cross U.S. 93 from Jackpot near the Idaho border to as far south as Caliente in breeding season and in search of food and water.

Antelope

Pronghorn antelope are the fastest mammal in North America, reaching speeds of 60 miles per hour. Through regulated hunting, transplanting animals and habitat improvement projects, antelope populations have been restored throughout the northern two-thirds of Nevada. Antelope will occasionally cross highways during daily travels or to seek refuge from deep snow in winter.

Bighorn Sheep

The desert bighorn sheep is Nevada's state mammal. With more mountain ranges than any other state in the contiguous U.S., Nevada is well-suited for the bighorn sheep that inhabit rugged canyons and mountain tops from the Oregon border to the Colorado River. The highest concentration of both bighorn sheep and human population exist in Clark and southern Nye County, leading to concerns with the naturally nomadic sheep crossing highways.

Desert Tortoise

Desert tortoise, federally listed as a threatened species, inhabit the Mojave Desert regions of southern Nevada. To help protect roadway safety and the desert tortoise, approximately 200 miles of tortoise-proof fencing has been installed along NDOT-maintained highways in Clark County. Fencing connected to culverts provide tortoise a passageway underneath roads. The Federal Highway Administration found the desert tortoise to be a species for which road mortality is among the greatest threats to survival.



WILDLIFE SAFETY CROSSINGS



**Increasing Safety.
Preserving Wildlife.**

