Drivers: Beware of wildlife on Alberta roadways

Edmonton... The sudden appearance of a wild animal in the middle of the road is a driver's nightmare. Alberta has an abundance of wildlife and many are active during the winter months. The numbers speak for themselves. In 2004, there were six fatalities and 293 injury collisions involving wildlife.

Roads attract wildlife because they provide a route of easy travel and roadside forage. Salted winter roads can also attract wildlife. Many species tend to be more active at dawn or dusk, when driving visibility is poor and traffic volume is high. Over the past five years, more than one-third of collisions involving animals occurred between 7 and 11 p.m.

To reduce collisions with wildlife:

- Scan the road and ditches ahead for animals, especially when travelling at dawn or dusk;
- Slow down in a curve, when reaching the crest of a hill or in wildlife populated areas;
- Watch for the shining eyes or silhouette of an animal at night and use high beams;
- Improve visibility by keeping the vehicle's windshield and headlights clean;
- Keep in mind that lights from oncoming traffic at night can make it difficult to see an animal on the road;
- Slow down if an animal is on or near the road and be prepared to stop, as their behaviour is unpredictable - an animal that has crossed the road can turn back in the vehicle's path;
- Look for more than one animal - some travel in groups;
- Brake firmly if an animal is in the vehicle's path, and do not swerve to avoid it;
- Honk in a series of short bursts to chase animals away;
- Leave a lot a room when driving around an animal on or near the road - a frightened animal may run in any direction;
- Do not throw food or food wrappers out of vehicles as this attracts animals;
- Watch for wildlife warning signs, use extra caution and slow down in areas where animal crossing signs are posted;
- Report all collisions to your insurance company, police service and the nearest Fish and Wildlife or Parks office;
- Contact the nearest Fish and Wildlife office in cases where an animal is injured or poses a threat to public safety;
- Remember that collisions with wildlife can result in extensive damage to a vehicle and serious injury to its occupants.

The Alberta government helps reduce the number of collisions with wildlife by installing fences, warning signs, roadside reflectors, and by maintaining vegetation control along highways. In addition, bushes and trees are cut back to allow motorists to see animals on either side of the road.

For information about traffic safety, please contact the Traffic Safety Initiative at (780) 422-8839 or visit www.saferoads.com.

Media enquiries may be directed to: