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# Drive**RIGHT**

with *Tim Filazek*

## Steering clear of wildlife collisions

Roadkill – no matter how you look at it, it's not a pretty picture.

The human cost of vehicle collisions with wildlife is substantial. Last year 290 people were injured and four were killed in animal-related collisions on Saskatchewan roads.

In fact, there were nearly 16,000 wildlife collisions reported to SGI in 2006 and the total cost in claims was more than \$29 million.

Encounters with wildlife on roadways are inevitable given the size and geography of our province but as a driver you can still take precautions to help protect yourself.

## Peak times

Wild animals are unpredictable but there are times when the risk of a collision is particularly high. Be alert during May and June when animals are drawn to ditches for road salt and to escape biting insects. They are also especially active in the late fall and early winter during mating season and migration. The peak times for collisions are dawn and dusk.

## Watch your speed

Yellow wildlife warning signs indicate areas of high risk. No matter the season or time of day, it is important to watch for signs of wildlife and reduce your speed accordingly. Slowing down reduces the distance required to stop and decreases the force of impact in the event of a collision.

## Be alert

It's important to constantly scan the road from shoulder to shoulder. Being alert is still your best defense against a collision. When you see an animal at the side of the road, slow down and pass by slowly. For night driving, look for the glowing eyes of animals and use your high beams whenever possible.

## What to do (and what not to do)

Remain calm if an animal appears on the road in front of you. If you have time to stop, do so at a safe distance and stay alert. When one

animal crosses the road, others often follow. You can also sound your horn to scare wildlife away from the road.

If an animal appears suddenly and surprises you, remember to brake firmly and stay in control of your vehicle. Avoid swerving because you may turn into oncoming traffic or roll into the ditch.

Sometimes collisions with wildlife are unavoidable even if you take every precaution and remain alert at the wheel. In these circumstances, try to remain calm. Aim your vehicle at the spot where the animal came from, not where it is going. Try for a glancing blow rather than a head-on encounter and let up on your brake just before you collide. This causes the front of your vehicle to rise slightly and reduces the chances of the animal going through your windshield.

Hitting an animal can be an extremely traumatic experience. If possible, move to the shoulder and turn on your hazard lights.

Take a moment to regain your composure and then assess the damage to your vehicle. Do not approach the animal, especially if it appears to be wounded. Injured animals can be extremely dangerous.

Call the police or your local RCMP detachment if there are human injuries or significant damage to your vehicle. If the damage is less severe, you may continue driving and follow regular SGI claims reporting procedures.

*Do you have a driving tip you would like addressed in this column? E-mail your question or concern to: [communications@sgi.sk.ca](mailto:communications@sgi.sk.ca).*

