

By Carolyn Lee

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According to State Farm Insurance claims data, the number of deer-vehicle collisions in Nebraska is up 54 percent from five years ago. That compares with an 18.3 percent increase over the entire United States.

Using its claims data, State Farm estimates 2.4 million collisions between deer and vehicles occurred in the U.S. during the two-year period between July 1, 2007 and June 30, 2009.

There were an estimated 12,261 deer-vehicle collisions in Nebraska between July 1, 2008 and June 30, 2009.

Statistics regarding deer-vehicle collisions in Chase County aren't available, according to Sheriff Tim Sutherland. "There are a lot we don't even investigate," he mentioned.

"If the car is driveable they go on home, then report a dead deer," he explained. The Sheriff's Department then contacts the appropriate roads department to clean up the remains.

Sutherland noted that if damage to a vehicle is more than \$1,000, even if no one is injured, it needs to be reported to the state. A special form is available at the Sheriff's office.

"We haven't really had an increase" in deer-vehicle accidents, Sutherland said. "This time of year with hunting season open, people need to be aware," he said. "Until the corn gets knocked down and hunting season is over," deer are plentiful at dawn, dusk and late at night.

Sutherland said the majority of deer-vehicle accidents in Chase County occur for several miles west of Wauneta, several miles around the Highway 6-61 junction by Enders Reservoir, and around the railroad tracks at Enders.

Avoiding collisions

Deer-vehicle collisions are more frequent during the deer migration and mating season in October, November and December. The combination of growing deer populations and the displacement of deer habitat caused by urban sprawl are producing increasingly hazardous conditions for motorists and deer.

Tips to reduce the chances of becoming involved in a collision include:

Be aware of posted deer crossing signs. These are placed in active deer crossing areas;

Remember that deer are most active between 6 and 9 p.m.;

Use high beam headlamps as much as possible at night to illuminate the areas from which deer will enter roadways;

Keep in mind that deer generally travel in herds—if you see one, there is a strong possibility others are nearby;

Do not rely on car-mounted deer whistles;

If a deer collision seems inevitable, attempting to swerve out of the way could cause you to lose control of your vehicle or place you in the path of an oncoming vehicle.