

# Safety Tips #22

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## Close Encounters With Deer

Deer-vehicle collisions are responsible for an estimated 200 human fatalities, 29,000 injuries and over \$1.1 billion in property damage each year, and, yes, we have 'em in Colorado.

There are lots of deer, their movements are erratic and quick, and they are large. They present a real hazard to motorcycle riders.

What can we do to mitigate the problem? We can modify our riding style to fit the situation. When you see one (or more) of those highway signs that warn us of the possible presence of deer, you are already in an area know to have had numerous deer strikes. My experience tells me that deer are more likely to be near the roadway at dawn and at dusk (when visibility is impaired), and especially if there is a stream nearby.

Often deer are very difficult to see as they blend in with the surroundings. We need to scan the sides of the roadway for movement of the animal(s), which can often be the only clue we will get that it is there. Deer tend to begin sudden movement as a vehicle approaches. I have heard many different theories on which way a deer will move and the alleged causes for its choice, but, in the end, these are just theories. Deer do NOT usually run away from a vehicle or from the roadway when they become startled. I have seen deer run from a safe spot on the side of the road right

into the flow of traffic and a collision. I have even seen a deer jump right *over* a moving motorcyclist!

If we suspect the presence of deer we should ride at a lower rate of speed, and be prepared to slow quickly and possibly come to a complete stop in a hurry. Be aware that swerving is often futile, as the deer might run right into your new path; plus, swerving could cause you more control problems than continuing in a straight line, and swerving cannot be done successfully under hard braking anyway. If you see a deer near the road, begin braking immediately, even if the animal is not in motion; that could change fast, and like I said, deer are unpredictable.

A word on deer whistles: there are products available that are supposed to add a margin of safety in the presence of deer – whistles. There are some that are activated by the wind that enters their apertures from the forward motion of the bike, and there are some that are electrically powered. The question is, do they work? And there are no provable answers. So whatever your opinion is of these things, remember it's just that: an opinion. Therefore, I recommend that we not rely on deer whistles to decrease the safety hazard posed by deer.

Enjoy your ride, and watch out for deer.