



Tailgate Topics & Tips



Tailgate Topic #12 - Watch for Animals



For many of us the question isn't "Have you ever hit a deer (or other animal) on the road?", it's "How many have you hit?" (this year..?).

The Question for this Meeting:

What kind of animals must we be aware of and prepared to avoid in our area?

Answers could be:

Wild Animals?

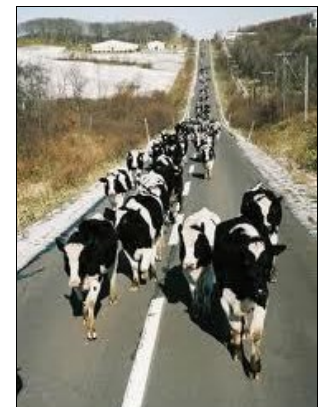
- * Deer
- * Moose
- * Elk
- * Bear
- * Mountain Sheep
- * Coyotes
- * Others?

Domestic Animals?

- * Dogs
- * Cats
- * Horses
- * Cattle
- * Sheep
- * Others?

Has anyone here ever collided with one of these?

Tell us about it.



In retrospect, do you think there was anything different that you would do leading up to the collision?

(Discuss...there isn't a correct or incorrect answer to this...)

One common factor whether we are discussing wild or domestic animals is that they are unpredictable: they do the unexpected.

What are the defenses against collisions with animals?

Tailgate Tips:

Be aware of areas where wildlife may congregate on or near the road.

- Right of ways where grass or other forage is available.
- Near water sources (particularly if you are in a dry area).
- On the road in winter where some species will seek and lick the salt off the road if road salt is used.



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In rural areas where there are farms or open range, be aware of cattle, horses or other domestic animals.



Be Aware of the Time of Day and the Time of Year.

The most active time of day for many animals is around dawn, dusk and the first few hours of darkness. Take extra care at these times, as well as in the spring and fall mating seasons.

On roads where sight lines are poor, watch the shoulders and right of way for signs of wildlife or domestic animals.

If there are deep ditches, or berms, be aware that deer can jump out of ditches onto the road giving you little time to react or brake.

When one animal is seen, there are often others. Deer, particularly, and mountain sheep in the Rocky Mountains, are found in groups. Before celebrating the fact that you just missed one....watch for the one that follows.

The best defense when you are travelling in an area where there may be wildlife is to reduce speed and be extra aware. When driving in an area where you know there are likely to be animals on the road, or where you have seen "road kill" in the past, drop your speed. Most collisions with animals occur because the car is travelling too fast to avoid them.

If you are travelling on a multilane road and have the choice, select the middle lanes to give yourself more space from the shoulder where animals are less easily seen and more time to slow if one moves onto the road.

Does anyone have any more ideas?



Practical Challenge:

As a group, discuss and list the roads or areas in your operational area where special care must be taken to watch for animal collisions.

(Leader can list on a whiteboard)

Make personal note of the ones from this list that you must drive and review your speed and tactics on that roadway next time you drive it.

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