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MOTORISTS URGED TO BE CAUTIOUS FOR DEER ON ROADS THIS FALL

(12/P117) TRENTON – The Department of Environmental Protection’s Division of Fish and Wildlife is urging motorists to be alert for white-tailed deer on roads across the state with the arrival of the fall breeding season, especially during morning and evening commutes when visibility may be poor and deer are more active.

“White-tailed deer are on the move and unpredictable during this season,” said Division of Fish and Wildlife Director David Chanda. “Deer are much more likely to dart into roads without warning at this time of year. Drivers should be extra alert to avoid collisions that could result in injuries and damage to their vehicles.”

Deer movements related to breeding are beginning now and will pick up in the coming weeks. Studies indicate the peak of the mating season in New Jersey occurs in late October and throughout November and December in all regions of the state.

Triggered by shorter days and cooler weather, deer disperse and move around considerably as they search for mates. Deer behavior is likely to be sudden and unpredictable.

In many instances, deer will wander closer to and onto roadways. They may suddenly stop in the middle of a road, crossing and even re-crossing it. The danger is particularly pronounced at dawn and dusk when many people are commuting to and from work. Visibility resulting from low light or sun glare may be difficult during these times.

Commuters should be especially alert and drive with additional caution when daylight saving time ends on Nov. 4. Normal driver commuting times will more closely align with peak deer activity periods after this time.

“This is a tricky time of year for drivers,” said DEP Supervising Wildlife Biologist Carol Stanko. “There are probably as many deer killed in New Jersey each year by cars and trucks than as by hunters.”

There are an estimated 110,000 white-tailed deer in huntable areas of New Jersey, but there also are an uncounted number of deer in other places where hunting is not allowed. There were 30,866 deer struck by vehicles in the state in 2010, according to an insurance industry estimate, which is considered to be conservative in its count.

The DEP offers the following tips to help motorists stay safe:

- If you spot a deer, slow down and pay attention to possible sudden movement. If the deer doesn't move, don't go around it. Wait for the deer to pass and the road is clear.
- Pay attention to "Deer Crossing" signs. They are there for a reason. Slow down when traveling through areas known to have a high concentration of deer so you will have ample time to stop if necessary.
- If you are traveling after dark, use high beams when there is no oncoming traffic. High beams will be reflected by the eyes of deer on or near roads.
- If you see one deer, be on guard: others may be in the area. Deer typically move in family groups at this time of year and cross roads single-file. Female deer are being chased by bucks and during breeding phase are often unaware of traffic.
- Don't tailgate. Remember: the driver in front of you might have to stop suddenly to avoid hitting a deer.
- Always wear a seatbelt, as required by law. Drive at a safe and sensible speed, taking into account weather, available lighting, traffic, curves and other road conditions.
- If a collision appears inevitable, do not swerve to avoid impact. The deer may counter-manuever suddenly. Brake firmly, but stay in your lane. Collisions are more likely to become fatal when a driver swerves to avoid a deer and instead collides with oncoming traffic or a fixed structure along the road.
- Report any deer-vehicle collision to a local law enforcement agency immediately.

For more information about white-tailed deer in New Jersey, visit:

<http://www.njfishandwildlife.com/deer.htm>

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