

EFFECTIVENESS OF DEER WHISTLES



Dear NETS Members,

January 25, 2011

Kevin Wright (UnionGas) asked about the effectiveness of deer whistles.

Thank you to those of you who provided responses.

Please contact me if you have any questions or suggestions.

Yours truly,

Jack

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		<p>Are any of the NETS Member companies utilizing Deer Whistles (please indicate wind or electronic type) with any level of effectiveness. Effectiveness level would be based on employee reports that deer seem alerted by approaching vehicle and/or reduced deer strikes?</p> <p>Please indicate the name and type of whistle being used as we are considering the use of this device.</p> <p>Kevin Wright (UnionGas) KPWright@uniongas.com</p>
1	AstraZeneca Mary Rose	<p>This question occasionally comes in from our field reps, but our research has shown they are not effective so we do not provide them to our drivers. I've attached a website that includes some commentary on their effectiveness:</p> <p>http://cru.cahe.wsu.edu/CEPublications/eb1677/eb1677.html</p>
2	GE Jeri Hall	<p>GE Healthcare has not had any experience with these devices, but would be interested in other's feedback as we have alot of property damage claims due to hitting deer.</p>
3	Johnson & Johnson Gabriel kardos	<p>If you click on the link below there is a good newsclip on Utube saying the whistles don't work especially during mating season. At J&J we don't have them as a safety feature included in our policies or guidelines.</p> <p>I particularly encounter deer where I live next to a national park almost on a daily basis in the evening and have deer whistles on my personal car, have not seen them run from the road because of my whistles, they</p>

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		<p>just freeze. Best defence is to take it slow when you see deer crossing signs, use high beams and if you have to hit the deer then hit it (I hit one last year). It much safer to hit the animal than to swerve to avoid which may lead to a much more serious event in my experiences of animal hits. I was once overtaking a bus, a cat ran out in front of the bus where I couldn't see it, I grabbed the steering wheel tighter and just ran over the cat and continued my overtaking of the bus, had I not, I'd be very injured possibly dead today.</p> <p>I went back to see the poor cat, it was gone so they really must have 9 lives so it was a happy ending for all!</p> <p>http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_l4F9vrmtQQ</p>
4	Kidds Distribution Scott Duncan	<p>The response on the A9 road in Scotland (extremely bad stretch of road was a cull.</p> <p>http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/low/scotland/4523200.stm</p> <p>another approach (and more human) was partnership working between specialists in road safety and animals</p> <p>http://forargyll.com/2009/04/deer-warning-april-may-the-most-likely-time-for-road-collisions/</p> <p>The most successful methods that seem to have worked in Scotland were simply fencing to prevent the deer's movements onto or across major roads and high risk roads as well as managed visual signage with education aimed at drivers at times of year where it was more prevalent.</p>
5	Liberty Mutual Dave Melton	<p>http://www.deercrash.com/</p> <p>See article below also (page 5).</p>

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6	Nationwide Bill Windsor	Research has shown deer whistles to be ineffective. Attached is a IIHS advisory that provides some basic information. There is more information if you go to www.IIHS.org and search for deer.
7	NHTSA Cheryl Neverman	<p>When I worked for the Iowa Highway Safety Office (a hundred years or so ago) the State Patrol installed them on all state- owned vehicles including our highway safety office staff vehicles.</p> <p>They did a before and after study showing a reasonable reduction in crashes involving deer, but I have no idea where you could find the study or whether they still use them. The study included damage reports to state-owned vehicles. It was (really) about 23 years ago. The Federal government fleet does not use them.</p>
8	Sunoco Bill Sanicky	Never have been able to prove that they work and we do not install them on any vehicles. Vehicles that had them struck deer.
9	UPS Gerry Eaker	We have not found any credible studies that prove statistically that they work.

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Loss Prevention Reference Note

Large Animal/Vehicle Crashes and Do “Deer Whistles” Work?

Each year there are between 500,000 and 750,000 large animal/vehicle collisions. Unfortunately, experts believe that the number of reported incidents may be less than half of those that actually occur.

The National Safety Council estimates that over 4,000 injuries and over 100 fatalities result from these crashes. According to the Insurance Information Institute large animal/vehicle crashes cost an average of \$2,000 each and when a fatality is involved, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration estimates that the lifetime economic cost of a fatality is almost a million dollars.

The growing deer population has led to a dramatic increase in large animal/vehicle collisions. In the 1980s the deer population was approximately 10 million. Today, deer number more than 25 million. Crashes due to deer and vehicle encounters will continue to increase as urban habitats encroach upon rural environments.

Tips to Prevent Crashes

Below are tips that may help drivers avoid hitting a deer or other large animal, and help mitigate the crash:

- Be especially aware of the potential to hit deer during their mating season; September through December.
- Be attentive in the early morning and evening hours, which are the most active times for deer. Crash frequency is much higher during those times.
- Be alert and drive with caution when driving through a deer crossing zone. Deer crossing signs are placed where other deer have been involved in crashes. If you see one deer look for others—they seldom run alone.

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- If you see a deer or other animal in the roadway, slow down and blow your horn with one long blast to frighten it away.
- Use your high-beam headlights whenever safe to do so in order to see animals on or near the roadway. Be cautious, however, with lights. If an animal is in the road you may “freeze” it in place.
- Do not swerve to avoid hitting an animal. Instead, brake firmly. Swerving may confuse the animal because it won’t know which way to run. Hitting a deer is safer than hitting an oncoming vehicle or running off the road and striking a roadside obstruction.
- All occupants of the vehicle must wear seat belts. In large animal/vehicle crashes the most serious injuries and fatalities have occurred because people were not wearing their seat belts.
- If you strike an animal, immediately activate your emergency flashers, pull safely off the road and call for help. Do not touch the animal. The frightened animal, in attempting to move, could hurt you or further injure itself.

Do Air-fed Deer Whistles Work?

Manufacturers promote deer whistles as “acoustic attention-getters,” alleging deer will react to the whistle by remaining still.

A 2002 study published by the University of Connecticut concluded that air-fed deer whistles, small plastic devices attached to car bumpers, are “acoustically ineffective.” The study’s goal was to determine the actual frequencies generated by the whistles and the intensity at which they are produced; compare that data to the hearing abilities of deer; and then take the animal’s acoustic behavior into consideration.

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According to scientific literature on the subject, there is an amount of space in which an animal feels safe, but once that boundary is violated, the animal’s reaction is unpredictable. Its response depends on a number of factors including age, sex, type of enemy, and surroundings. The animal may run away from the vehicle or run towards it.

Georgia’s Game and Fish Department found that in hundreds of observations from vehicles equipped with deer whistles, deer did not respond. Whistles on vehicles going 25-30 mph produced no ultrasonic sound, although some ultrasonic and lower frequencies were

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produced when the whistles were blown by mouth. According to wildlife biologists at the University of Georgia, neither deer nor humans can hear ultrasonic sound. Whistles blown by mouth near captive deer produce no response.

A University of Wisconsin study found that three types of whistles did produce low-pitched and ultrasonic sounds at vehicle speeds of 30 to 70 miles per hour; however, researchers were unable to verify that deer responded to the sounds, even at distances well below the distances from which manufacturers claim the whistles are heard. Moreover, deer would only be able to hear the whistles if there were a straight line between the deer and the whistle. If curves, trees, or other obstacles came between the deer and the whistle, the device would be ineffective.

Based upon their own research and a review of others, Texas A&M University concludes it is “very unlikely that deer whistles will be effective at reducing deer-vehicle accidents.”

Technology

Several studies are underway to determine if technology can warn motorists of the presence of animals on or near the roadway. One study will use microwave technology to identify the presence of an animal and, subsequently, alert motorists using dynamic warning signs.

Other interventions being tested include headlight-activated reflectors located alongside highways that create an “optical fence” to stop wildlife from crossing roadways.

Another is the addition of deer crossovers and underpasses. Although they are admittedly very expensive, they are effective. Crossovers are being implemented in Europe with some success. The rationale is that animals are being isolated to their prime habitat by roadways and other construction. Providing them with easy connections to their fragmented habitats may greatly reduce the frequency of animal crashes. Improved fencing in deer crossing areas is also being considered.

Another technology just becoming available is in-vehicle infrared cameras that identify the heat “signature” of animals at night and project an image of the animal(s) on the windshield to alert the driver to their presence. This technology is available now on a few high-end automobiles.

Conclusions

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Vehicle collisions with wildlife will continue to be a problem as the size of deer and other animal herds increase, as humans encroach upon and fragment their habitats, as more vehicle miles are driven, and because motorists are complacent even where warning signs alert them to the possible presence of animals on roadways.

- Be prepared to react when driving in areas where animal life is known to be in the roadways
- Be aware of the prime times of day and calendar year when deer and other large animals are most active
- Understand that current “deer crossing” signs are located where previous animal/vehicle collisions have occurred
- Know how to maintain vehicle control if a collision is imminent
- Do not attempt to swerve out of the way of the animal

The illustrations, instructions and principles contained in the material are general in scope and, to the best of our knowledge, current at the time of publication. No attempt has been made to interpret any referenced codes, standards or regulations. Please refer to the appropriate code-, standard-, or regulation-making authority for interpretation or clarification. Provided that you always reproduce our copyright notice and any other notice of rights, disclaimers, and limitations, and provided that no copy in whole or in part is transferred, sold, lent, or leased to any third party, you may make and distribute copies of this publication for your internal use.

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