

# **The Deer Initiative**

## **Deer, Habitats and Impacts Conference March 2007**

### **Deer Vehicle Collisions – Future Management Options**

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#### **The Highways Agency:**

- is responsible for the core strategic road network in England
- = about 2% by length of England's roads
- which carries 33% of all traffic and 60% of all HGV movements
- includes Motorways and all-purpose trunk roads
- These are the busiest roads in Europe-and they are under stress

#### **Deer and Traffic:**

- HA became interested in the problem of deer and traffic ten years ago and commissioned a project to examine the extent of problem with SGS in 1997
- The result rather alarmed DETR !
- The setting up of the Deer Initiative presented the opportunity for wider study
- The current project started in 2003

#### **The Deer Vehicle collisions project to date:**

- It is primarily a data gathering exercise
- From a range of different sources
- There is an Issue of precision
- Data collected from all road types
- It identifies 'Hot Spots'
- External influences on the data
- How to use the data

22389 records from Jan 2000 – Dec 2005 were mapped and cover most of England with a few gaps but very little in Wales.

In terms of relative frequency of collisions, hot spots were seen to be in Cannock Chase, the New Forest, Forest of Dean, Ashdown Forest, Ashridge Woods, Thetford Forest with 75-300 DVC reported per 5km x 5km OS grid square.

Following closely with 31-75 DVC per OS square were Dinmore Hill, the Mendips and Epping Forest.

Species involved varied with roe and muntjac being the most frequent.

**Mitigation measures:**

- Fencing- this is the traditional approach but it is expensive
- Deterrents- sound emitting pillars, wolves eyes, etc but do they work ?
- Driver warnings such as static and flashing signs
- Tunnels and bridges to enable wildlife to cross the roads

**Mitigation by management:**

- Vegetation management - cutting back trees and grass verges to enable longer lines of sight
- Deer management – reducing numbers in hot spots

There is also a WELAFRE ISSUE – both for deer which may be injured and limp off to die and for the road user, who may also suffer injuries or even death.

**Lessons learned:**

- Danish model
- Urgent need for a common UK approach
- Habitat de-fragmentation
- Better driver education is needed
- Local highway management- a budget issue?
- The wider issue of wildlife destruction by traffic