

Road Traffic Accidents in the Dinmore & Canon Pyon Area



If you travel between Hereford and Leominster then you are likely to take the A49 which goes right through the heart of Dinmore Woods and is one of the top three deer accident 'black spots' in the UK, with in excess of 30 deer killed each year.

Such deer-related traffic accidents have a considerable impact:

- they present one of the main causes of mortality among wild populations of deer
- they pose a major animal welfare issue, because a high proportion of deer which are hit by cars are not killed outright. Instead many have to be put down at the roadside, while others escape to die later of their injuries.
- they pose a safety hazard to road users, and lead to substantial damage to cars and numerous human injuries as well as a number of fatalities in most years.

If you are involved in a collision with deer please contact:

West Mercia Police Force Tel: 0845 7 444 888



The RTA Project

Across the UK, there are an estimated 30 - 50,000 Road Traffic Accidents involving deer and up to 20 human fatalities every year.

To combat this major problem, research is currently being undertaken to develop a national system for recording information on deer-related road traffic accidents that occur throughout the UK. This research has been funded through the RTA Project partnership, which includes The Highways Agency and the Scottish Executive, together with the Woodland Trust, the National Forest Company and the Deer Study and Resource Centre.

Research will also be carried out to look at how the various methods available to alleviate the problem can be combined with better driver awareness and habitat management at the roadsides.

Look out for local signage and watch your speed

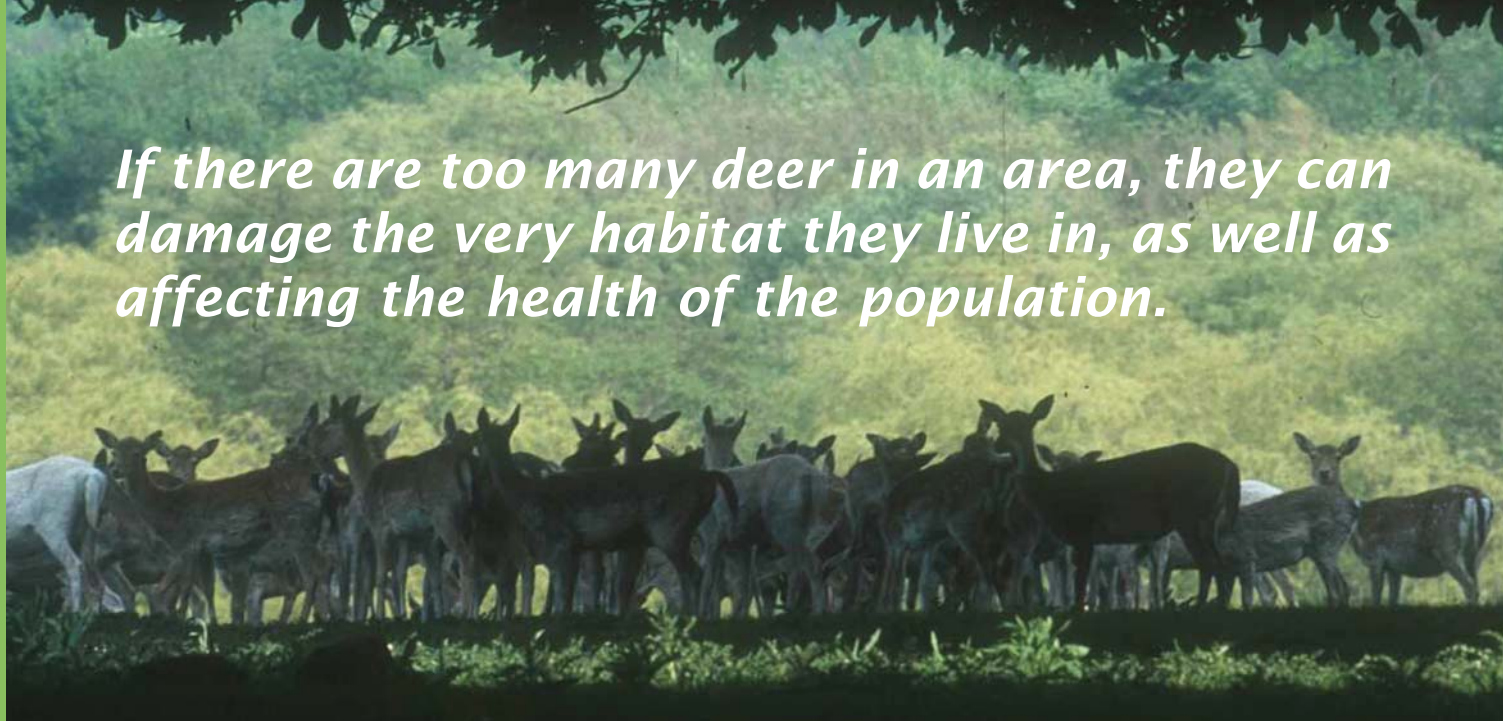
The best way to avoid a collision is to be aware that deer could be crossing and watch your speed as you drive through the countryside, but especially when travelling through wooded areas at night. During April and October there is a greater movement of deer due to calving and rutting. These months also co-incide with the change in 'twilight' hours so please be more vigilant when driving at dusk.

Deer Reflectors

Deer reflectors are used at various points along the A49 and other roads in the county to discourage deer from venturing towards the road. They work by reflecting the light from car headlights back into the woods to alert the deer and keep them away from the fast moving traffic. These are successful in steering deer away from certain areas but they will still want to cross the road to reach a food source and will move to another crossing point.



If there are too many deer in an area, they can damage the very habitat they live in, as well as affecting the health of the population.



Deer Management

Management of deer should be an integral part of a woodland management plan, and not an afterthought. It should be a continuous process and not just done in response to specific problems.

The Dinmore herd are managed by the Dinmore & Canon Pyon Deer Management Group – a partnership of local landowners, their agents and Herefordshire Council supported by The Deer Initiative. It is down to landowners themselves whether or not they wish to carry out management but the Deer Management Group encourages co-operation between local landowners and can offer specialist advice in association with the Deer Initiative.



Scale: 1:100,000
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Prevention is better than cure

The Effect of the deer on the ecology of the Dinmore Hill Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and the surrounding areas is significant. Recent English Nature woodland condition surveys show that the majority of SSSI sites in the Dinmore Hill area are in unfavourable condition due to deer browsing. Two of the sites surveyed within the Dinmore area are actually declining in condition due to deer pressure.



In the worst affected areas deer are grazing out all the wild flowers and shrubs in the layers below the trees this means that the woods have fewer wild flowers such as bluebells, dogs mercury and oxlips which butterflies and other invertebrates rely on for nectar. Removal of the shrub layer which contains many of our traditional species such as hazel bramble, honeysuckle, wayfaring tree and wild service tree reduces the food and nesting places for animals and birds. It also takes out the new young trees which should be growing up to replace the ageing ones. In the vicinity of Queenswood Country park there is much less damage because visitors and their dogs keep the deer at bay.

Deer are an important part of our natural landscape and the Deer Management Group aims to control the population by culling which reduces the impact of the deer on the local environment, but it does not want to remove them entirely.

How do you know how many to cull?

The best way to determine this is for landowners and managers to work together through the local Deer Management Group. The population level is estimated through sightings, dung counts, etc. The desired/acceptable number that the various habitats can sustain is estimated and, knowing breeding rates, the numbers of males and females that need to be culled can thus be worked out.

Isn't it cruel to kill them?

Stalkers aim to take out poorer specimens and the weaker/older members of the herd, in the same way that a natural predator would hunt - which in turn results in a stronger, healthier population of deer.

Deer are culled in accordance with legal requirements and accepted codes of practice such as that produced by the British Association for Shooting and Conservation (BASC) and the British Deer Society (BDS). Legal close seasons govern when particular sexes and species can be culled.

Who does the culling?

It is up to individual landowners to decide who should cull deer on their land. The Dinmore & Canon Pyon Deer Management Group encourages all landowners to ensure that those carrying out culling are fully trained and competent in stalking by seeking advice from the Deer Initiative (DI), British Association for Shooting and Conservation (BASC), British Deer Society (BDS) etc.

What happens to the deer then?

This very much depends on the arrangements, which the landowner has with the stalker but almost all enter the food chain. Carcasses must be handled well and hygienically. Venison whether in whole carcasses or parts can only be sold by a licensed game dealer. Dealers are licensed by Local Authorities and most carcasses are inspected by Veterinary Inspectors. Venison is a healthy, low cholesterol, high protein meat.

Venison

If you would like more information about Venison, contacts for local Venison suppliers and recipe ideas please visit the heartwoods website :

www.heartwoods.co.uk