

# WILDLIFE ON THE MOVE! Motorists are reminded to slow down, drive cautiously during wildlife migration season

---

November 12, 2010 - Northwestern Colorado/CDOT Region 3 - New wildlife fencing, ramps and signs along I-70 & US 6 between Gypsum and Dowd Junction (SH 24).

**WILDLIFE ON THE MOVE** - It's that time again - Colorado wildlife are on the move! They are migrating to wintering habitats and that unfortunately leads to higher incidents of wildlife-vehicle collisions (WVCs). Each fall, a group of organizations\* come together to for the "Wildlife on the Move" message to motorists statewide: be aware, drive with caution and slow down, especially at night, when the majority of WVCs occur.

*(\*The organizations for the "Wildlife on the Move" campaign include the Colorado Department of Transportation, Colorado Division of Wildlife, Colorado State Patrol, Rocky Mountain Insurance Information Agency and the Center for Native Ecosystems.)*

"As Colorado has an abundance of deer and elk, as well as other wildlife, that live near our urban and rural areas, motorists need to be aware that they can cross our roads without warning at most any time of day or night," said Colorado State Patrol Chief Colonel James Wolfenbarger. "Slow down and stay alert when you see a highway wildlife warning sign especially between dusk and dawn. If you see one deer or elk, expect others. Remember to scan ahead on the sides of the road for signs of movement and to watch for the shining eyes of animals that reflect car headlights at night. Most importantly, slow down and concentrate on retaining control of your vehicle. It is important to maintain control before, during and after a collision with an animal should one occur. "

Wildlife-vehicle collisions happen year round, 24/7. However, there is always an increase during migration season, and particularly during the hours between dusk and dawn. These collisions are not only a matter of safety, but can be quite costly as well.

"The insurance industry pays out nearly \$1.1 billion a year in claims for all wildlife-vehicle collisions nationwide—a big portion of that is in November, when these types of collisions increase," says Carole Walker, Executive Director of the Rocky Mountain Insurance Information Association. "A single claim for a wildlife-vehicle collision is averaging \$2,900."

**NEW FENCING ALONG I-70**—CDOT and contractor Double D Construction, LLC, have just completed a project that installed nearly 100,000 linear feet of wildlife fencing & fencing material along a 33-mile stretch of I-70, from Gypsum to Dowd Junction (at SH 24). Contracted to Double D for \$1.89 million, this work consisted of removing existing state right of way fence where necessary, installing wildlife fence between MM 140 and MM 173, and installing signs on US 6.

Crews also constructed median crossovers, which involved removal of 12 feet of concrete safety barrier in two separate sections (at MP 171.5 and 172.5) and installation of guardrail in these areas to allow animals both large

and small to cross the interstate. Finally, a total of 58 wildlife escape ramps were constructed—four of which were funded by the **Colorado Division of Wildlife**. These one-way earthen ramps are constructed six feet high (where a notch in the eight-foot high fence has been cut), allowing animals to escape the highway right of way and jump back to safety on the other side.

For the five-year period from 2002 through 2006 (the most recent data available) there were 361 wildlife-vehicle collisions (WVC) out of 1,996 total crashes—making WVCs about 18 percent of all types of collisions along this stretch of I-70. This percentage varies from year to year and is higher during wildlife migration season (generally October through February).

“It’s important to note that these WVC collision numbers represent only those that were reported to law enforcement—many more go unreported,” CDOT Eagle-area Resident Engineer Martha Miller said. “We hope this additional fencing and escape ramps along I-70 will help decrease the incidence of wildlife-vehicle collisions along this stretch,”

The organizations supporting the ***Wildlife on the Move*** campaign remind motorists that this is the time of year—particularly November—when wildlife-vehicle collisions are at a seasonal high. Drivers should reduce their speeds and drive with extra caution.