

Rider Education: A continuing Awareness

Bestial Bashes

If they put up a sign, maybe there really is a problem. You're on a trip out west, enjoying the forests and mountain scenery. You got an early start today, to put in some miles before breakfast. The two-lane state highway curves gently through the hills. There are just a few other drivers on the road, and you're relaxed and enjoying the brisk morning air, maintaining the same pace as everyone else-about five over the limit.

As the highway passes through some pastureland, you notice a warning sign, something about ELK. You don't slow down, because no one else does. But just as you pass the warning sign, lights begin to flash. As you're wondering what the flashing lights mean, you suddenly see several large animals milling out onto the highway ahead. You quickly roll off the throttle and brake, and then brake harder as you realize you're closing too fast on a herd of wild elk. You're still braking to the limit as the bike grazes one of the animals just hard enough to knock the bike over. Fortunately, there aren't any serious injuries to you, the bike, or the animal.

When you see warning signs about wild animals, that's a clue that you're in an area where there have been too many animal strikes. To help reduce elk collisions in this particular area, radio collars have been attached to some of the animals in the herd. The lights flash when the herd is in close proximity to the sign's receiver.

Your best evasive maneuver to avoid an animal collision is a quick stop. So, your tactic of braking hard to avoid the elk herd was good, but obviously you weren't able to stop the bike from your cruising speed in the available distance. When you see animal warning signs such as elk, moose, antelope, or deer, you would be wise to slow down about 10 mph, and cover the brakes. Slowing down just 10 mph can reduce your stopping distance by 30 or 40 feet. However, since wild animals tend to feed at dawn and dusk, your best defense against animal collisions is to plan your ride to avoid being on the road either early in the morning or after dusk.

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Rider Ed

Street Strategy from Motorcycle Consumer News