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**As animal collisions spike, drivers warned to be extra vigilant**

*AAMI data reveals country’s most dangerous hotspots for animal collisions*

With days becoming shorter, AAMI is urging even the most experienced motorists to watch out for wildlife as animal collisions spike and remain high during Winter months.

According to the latest data from national insurer AAMI, more than 10 per cent of all animal collisions from 2021 occurred in May, and drivers are more likely to hit a kangaroo – or a wallaby – when the temperature drops and a mix of tricky driving conditions come into play.

Kristie Newton from WIRES, NSW Wildlife Information, Rescue and Education Service, said: “As we head into the cooler months and shorter days, we generally see an increase in activity – particularly from nocturnal wildlife as they cross roads in search of food.”

AAMI’s Head of Motor Claims VIC and TAS, Matt Pugliese, warned drivers to be on the look-out for wildlife – especially in areas recently affected by floods and severe weather – as animals on the move may accidentally traverse onto roads.

“While drivers should always be on the lookout when behind the wheel, now in particular is the time for drivers to keep their eyes peeled for wildlife crossing roads. Be extra vigilant especially at dawn and dusk when visibility can be difficult, and nocturnal animals are more active,” Mr Pugliese said.

Analysis of more than 15,500 AAMI animal collision claims between 1 January and 31 December 2021 revealed Heathcote, in Victoria, as the country’s most dangerous hotspot for animal collisions. Victoria also ranked as the worst state for animal collisions, with almost one third of animal related accidents taking place on VIC roads. New South Wales and Queensland followed closely behind.

AAMI’s claims data revealed the top animal collision hotspots nationwide, in each state and territory, along with the most common day of week and time of day as:

Location	#1 State Hotspots	Most Common Time of Day	Most Common Day of Week
National	Heathcote (VIC)	Dusk	Friday
New South Wales	Jindabyne	Dusk	Sunday
Victoria	Heathcote	Dusk	Friday
Queensland	Charters Towers	Dusk	Sunday
Western Australia	Baldivis	Midnight	Friday
Tasmania	Kingston	Midnight	Saturday
South Australia	Port Augusta	Midnight	Thursday
Australian Capital Territory	Canberra	Dusk	Tuesday
Northern Territory	Katherine	Dawn	Friday



Ms Newton from WIRES warned: “As native animals come closer to the road to feed, drivers should be extra careful, especially near water sources like creeks or gullies, where thick fog can occur and reduce visibility.”

“Prolonged wet weather and the subsequent floods, have impacted wildlife, leaving many joeys and little roos orphaned, cold, wet and vulnerable. Vital food sources like grasses have been depleted leaving many animals starving or forced to move outside their habitat in search for food, and turning up in unusual places.”

She also provided advice on what drivers should do if they are involved in a collision with an animal.

“If you’ve been involved in an accident with wildlife, please pull over where it is safe to check whether the animal is injured. For your own safety never approach an adult kangaroo, even if it’s injured. If it has passed away, check its pouch as young animals will not survive long in these conditions.

“Keep any rescued joeys warm, ideally wrapped in a blanket, jumper or pillowcase, and keep in a dark and quiet place, calling for assistance as soon as you are able.”

AAMI’s Mr Pugliese added: “Wildlife is unpredictable and can appear out of nowhere, so it’s vitally important to slow down and be aware of your environment, particularly on rural roads and in signposted wildlife areas.

“We encourage drivers to always expect the unexpected, particularly out-of-towners driving on country roads. Don’t drive distracted and above all, drive to the conditions to keep yourself, family and our wildlife safe.”

AAMI’s data found motorists are most likely to experience a major collision with a kangaroo (77 per cent), wallaby (7 per cent) or wombat (3 per cent).

## **Tips for sharing the road with animals**

- If you notice roadkill, slow down and pay extra attention. It’s an indicator of wildlife in the area.
- If you spot a kangaroo crossing the road, it’s a sign that more roos will be following as they move in groups.
- If you see an animal on the road, slow down and brake, but avoid swerving so as not to endanger yourself and other drivers on the road. It’s far less dangerous to keep driving and damage your car than swerve to avoid it and collide with another vehicle or tree.
- If you’re involved in an animal collision, stop to check its welfare, but only if it is safe to do so. If the animal is alive and injured call WIRES or your local wildlife rescue service.
- If the animal has died due to the collision – especially if it is a kangaroo - check if it is a female and if there’s a joey(s) in her pouch or around her. Pouches/flaps of wombats and echidnas should also be checked as well as the surrounding area, as young echidnas are often dislodged during a vehicle collision.
- Drive slowly and be extra vigilant when driving at dawn or dusk, as this is when animals are most active.
- Use your peripheral vision and be aware of your surroundings, especially when travelling through forest or grassland areas where animals are not clearly visible.



Note to Editors

The **Top 5 animal collision hotspots** in each state are:

Victoria	
1.	Heathcote
2.	Bendigo
3.	Sunsbury
4.	Gisborne
5.	Wallan

New South Wales	
1.	Jindabyne
2.	Goulburn
3.	Dubbo
4.	Bungendore
5.	Orange

Queensland	
1.	Charters Towers
2.	Townsville
3.	Nebo
4.	Bioela
5.	Sarina

Western Australia	
1.	Baldivis
2.	Jurien Bay
3.	Carnarvon
4.	Albany
5.	Toodyay

South Australia	
1.	Port Augusta
2.	Kingston SE
3.	Coober Pedy
4.	Mount Gambier
5.	Mount Compas

Tasmania	
1.	Kingston
2.	New Norfolk
3.	Campbell Town
4.	Cambridge
5.	Swansea

Australian Capital Territory	
1.	Canberra
2.	Belconnen
3.	Hume
4.	Kambah
5.	Aranda

Northern Territory	
1.	Katherine
2.	Mataranka
3.	Jabiru
4.	Alice Springs
5.	Tenant Creek

*\* Claims data collected from Suncorp Group's network of brands including: AAMI, Suncorp Insurance, GIO, Apia, Shannons, CIL, Vero Insurance, Bingle, Essentials by AAI*

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