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Crashing with wildlife: Most Aussie drivers would dangerously swerve or slam the brakes to avoid a collision

- Around half of Aussies have collided with a 'roo' or other wildlife while driving, yet the vast majority (61 per cent) admit they would dangerously swerve or slam on the breaks to avoid hitting an animal – according to new research by AAMI.
- Shockingly, one in seven drivers (14 per cent) admit they have no clue what they'd do if they were involved in an impact collision with wildlife, or worse – would panic and freeze while behind the wheel!

Analysis of over 17,000 AAMI animal collision claims across the country between 1 January and 31 December 2022 revealed:

- Winter is the worst time of year for animal collisions, with almost one in three (30 per cent) accidents involving wildlife taking place in the cooler months from June to August.
- Heathcote in Victoria is Australia's most dangerous spot for animal collisions.

The worst hotspots for animal collisions nationwide are:

Location	#1 State Hotspots	Most Common Time of Day	Most Common Day of Week
National	Heathcote (VIC)	Evening Peak	Saturday
New South Wales	Dubbo	Evening Peak	Sunday
Victoria	Heathcote	Evening Peak	Saturday
Queensland	St George	Evening Peak	Friday
Western Australia	Baldivis	Midnight	Friday
Tasmania	Kingston	Midnight	Saturday
South Australia	Port Augusta	Evening Peak	Sunday
Australian Capital Territory	Canberra	Early Morning	Sunday
Northern Territory	Katherine	Evening Peak	Saturday

- Dusk is the most dangerous time for wildlife related road accidents, with more than a quarter (26 per cent) of accidents taking place between the hours of 4:30pm and 8pm.
- Saturday is the worst day of the week for animal collisions – with almost one third (30 per cent) of collisions taking place over the weekend (Saturday and Sunday).
- The most common animals that Aussie drivers collide with are; kangaroos and wallabies, wombats, dogs, deer and cows.
- Road accidents involving wildlife can be costly, with the average cost of an insurance claim between \$5,500 and \$6,400.
 - o In around one in seven claims (14 per cent) last year involving wildlife, the damage to the vehicle was so severe the car was written off.

Key insights from AAMI's research:

- Animal collisions are twice as likely to happen on rural roads (31 per cent) than suburban roads (15 per cent).
- More than three quarters of Australians (76 per cent) believe kangaroos are the animals that would cause the most damage to a car if involved in a collision, followed by wombats (16 per cent).



Comment attributable to Kahl Dwight, AAMI Head of Motor Claims:

“Be extra vigilant particularly around dawn and dusk as this is when nocturnal animals are more active. Visibility also becomes poorer which makes it harder to see wildlife and reduces the time a driver has to react, increasing the risk of a collision.

“We encourage drivers to always expect the unexpected and know ahead of time what they should do— which is slow down and brake but avoid swerving so as not to endanger yourself and other drivers. It’s far less dangerous to keep driving and damage your car than swerve to avoid it and collide with another vehicle or tree.

“To avoid crashing with wildlife this winter, use your peripheral vision and be aware of your surroundings. Wildlife is unpredictable and can appear out of nowhere so it’s best to always be on the lookout.”

Comment attributable to Kristie Newton from WIRES (Wildlife Information, Rescue and Education Service):

“The darker winter months are the most perilous time for wildlife on our roads. Hitting wildlife can not only cause vehicle damage and emotional distress for the driver involved, but also the loss of native animals, which has a huge impact on Australia’s biodiversity and endangered species.

“These types of collisions are particularly detrimental to koala populations, which are in serious decline across the country. A colony known as the Campbelltown koalas are the only growing population in NSW, however in recent years the recorded number of koalas hit and killed by motorists have doubled, with road accidents now the leading cause of koala deaths in the region.

“If you have hit an animal while driving, 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 road trauma – 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

“Keeping a small kit in your car, especially if you are driving in a high wildlife area, is another simple way to help injured wildlife in the event of an accident. This means you can assist with pouch checks and potentially save the lives of orphaned animals.”

[ENDS]

Notes to Editor

- The research findings were compiled through a national survey with a representative sample of 1,033 Australians aged 18+ and was conducted by Kantar in February 2023 on behalf of AAMI.
- Claims data collected from Suncorp Group’s network of brands including AAMI, Suncorp Insurance, GIO, Apia, Shannons, CIL, Vero Insurance, Bingle, Essentials by AAI
- About WIRES

To help wildlife that have been affected by motor vehicle accidents, Australians can donate to WIRES and contribute to the ongoing rescue and care of native animals. Donate here.

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The Top 5 animal collision hotspots in each state are:

Victoria	
1.	Heathcote
2.	Wallan
3.	Gisborne
4.	Halls Gap
5.	Woodend

New South Wales	
1.	Dubbo
2.	Goulburn
3.	Sutton
4.	Cooma
5.	Bungendore

Queensland	
1.	St George
2.	Townsville
3.	Roma
4.	Warwick
5.	Mareeba

Western Australia	
1.	Baldivis
2.	Nannup
3.	Jurien Bay
4.	Bullsbrook
5.	Kalbarri

South Australia	
1.	Port Augusta
2.	Mount Gambier
3.	Hawker
4.	Morgan
5.	Orroroo

Tasmania	
1.	Kingston
2.	Launceston
3.	Cambridge
4.	Huonville
5.	Latrobe

Australian Capital Territory	
1.	Canberra
2.	Kambah
3.	Hume
4.	Weston
5.	Symonston

Northern Territory	
1.	Katherine
2.	Adelaide River
3.	Humpty Doo
4.	Mataranka
5.	Batchelor