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Title

Summary of Animal-Vehicle Collisions in Los Alamos County, 1990–2004

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The Ecology Group has maintained a database of animal-vehicle collisions in Los Alamos County reported by Protection Technology Los Alamos, the Los Alamos Police Department, or the *Los Alamos Monitor* since 1990. Accident rates can be considered a crude indicator of trends in animal abundance, although they can be influenced by other factors, such as changes in speed limits, traffic volume, or road designs.

Elk and Deer Road Kills from 1990 to 2004

	Fall/Winter*		Spring/Summer*	
Year	Elk	Deer	Elk	Deer
1990	6	2	3	9
1991	4	2	5	11
1992	11	2	4	5
1993	7	1	4	4
1994	7	1	5	8
1995	4	7	4	13
1996	5	5	2	8
1997	14	8	2	3
1998	7	4	4	10
1999	3	1	6	11
2000	0	1	1	1
2001	5	0	1	4
2002	0	0	1	2
2003	0	2	0	3
2004	0	0	1	1

* Fall/Winter includes November and December of the previous year and January through March. Spring/Summer includes April through October.

There has been a noticeable decline in the number of winter accidents involving elk since about 1999, with the exception of 2001. There has also been some decline in the number of summer accidents. This coincides with the beginning of our regional extreme drought. However, another large landscape-altering event, the Cerro Grande fire, also occurred close to that time (May 2000). All of these factors may interact to determine where elk occur on the landscape. The winter of 2000–2001 had an unusually high amount of snowfall (over 35 inches in January). These observations of a declining elk accident rate are consistent with the hypothesis that a lack of snowfall during the drought period and the amount of forage in the Cerro Grande fire burned areas result in elk remaining at higher elevations. However, we have not tested that hypothesis.