



## A CUP OF HEALTH WITH CDC

### *Brake for Bullwinkle!*

Injuries from Motor-Vehicle Collisions with Moose --- Maine, 2000-2004

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**[Announcer]** This podcast is presented by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. CDC – safer, healthier people.

**[Ana Benson]** Welcome to *A Cup of Health with CDC*, a weekly broadcast of the MMWR, the Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report. I'm, Ana Benson, filling in for your host, Matthew Reynolds.

You might think it would be hard not to notice a moose! More than seven feet tall and weighing over a thousand pounds, they're very impressive animals. But on the highway, they can be hard to spot, and that can be deadly.

Here to discuss the dangers of highway collisions with moose and ways to avoid this sort of encounter is Araceli Rey, a CDC nurse epidemiologist and EIS officer. Ms. Rey and her colleagues recently published a report on injuries from motor-vehicle collisions with moose in the state of Maine.

Welcome to the show, Araceli.

**[Araceli Rey]** Thank you, Ana. It's a pleasure to be here.

**[Ana Benson]** Araceli, it sounds like colliding with a moose can result in more serious injury and damage that most people might realize. Could you tell us more about what makes this type of accident especially dangerous?

**[Araceli Rey]** Sure Ana. Moose are one of the largest animals in North America. They can measure up to 7 feet at the shoulder and they can weigh up to 1600 pounds. Because moose are taller, drivers won't usually see the eyes reflected in the headlights. This, combined with their dark fur, also makes it difficult to see a moose at night. Collisions with moose differ from collisions with other animals in that moose have a higher center of gravity. During a collision, a moose is usually struck in the legs. The moose usually rolls onto the hood of the vehicle, collapsing the windshield and the roof, and the animal usually enters the driver or front passenger compartment. The amount of damage depends on vehicular speed and the size of the moose.

**[Ana Benson]** Now, are there certain circumstances that would increase someone's chances of colliding with a moose?

**[Araceli Rey]** The majority of collisions in our study occurred during 6pm and 6am, with a peak at 10pm. This daily pattern may be explained by moose behavior in that moose are more active in the evening and at dawn. Seasonal patterns show that the majority of crashes occurred during May to October, and the highest number of crashes occurred in June. This pattern correlates with the increased activity of moose during the warmer months, and the mating season in September.

**[Ana Benson]** Now fortunately, I've never met a moose on the road, and probably most of our listeners haven't either. Where would we be more likely to encounter a moose on the highway?

**[Araceli Rey]**

In North America, moose can be found in Alaska, Canada, and throughout the northeastern United States. They can even be found as far south as the Rocky Mountains in Colorado. In Maine, however, the estimated moose population is about 29,000 moose, with the majority in the Northern part of state. Moose are attracted to areas near highways to feed on the roadside vegetation, and they also lick the road salt. They are especially fond of areas near streams and ponds.

**[Ana Benson]** You have just completed a study of injuries due to collisions with moose in Maine. Did you find any particular risk factors that played a role in such accidents?

**[Araceli Rey]**

Yes Ana, there are a few risk factors that are involved. One risk factor that was associated with injuries was the posted speed limit. Although we don't have that actual speed that the car was driving, we do know that the areas in which the posted speed limit was greater than 40 miles per hour were the locations in which the occupants of vehicles involved in moose crashes were more likely to be injured. Another risk factor that showed a significant association was age. Drivers that were less than 25 years had a higher risk for injury than older drivers. And finally, another risk factor would be that drivers of cars were more likely to be injured than drivers of larger vehicles.

**[Ana Benson]** What can you tell us about safety measures that might help drivers avoid colliding with a moose?

**[Araceli Rey]**

Using safe driving skills can help in avoiding a collision with a moose or any other collision. Paying attention to the road and avoiding distractions is very important. Keeping within the speed limit and slowing down when there is reduced visibility also helps. In Maine, we tell drivers not to drive "beyond their headlights", and always wear the safety belt. If you do see a moose standing in or near the roadway, use extreme caution. Slow down, and don't try to drive around the moose. Stay in your vehicle, and give the moose plenty of room and let them wander back off the road.

**[Ana Benson]** what you've described, these collisions sound much worse than fender benders! Did your study tell you anything about the dollar costs of these accidents?

**[Araceli Rey]**

No Ana, our study did not assess cost. However, I can say that in Maine, the estimated cost for collisions with moose is approximately 17 million dollars per year.

**[Ana Benson]** Wow, this has been very interesting. Thank you for taking the time to talk to us today, Araceli.

**[Araceli Rey]** You're welcome, Ana. Thank you for inviting me.

**[Ana Benson]** That's it for this week's show. Don't forget to join us next week. Until then, be well. This is Ana Benson for *A Cup of Health with CDC*.

**[Announcer]** To access the most accurate and relevant health information that affects you, your family and your community, please visit [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov).