

**CROSSROADS HOG**  
**Safety Thought**  
**November 2008**

## **BIKING WITH BAMBI**

This is the story of a young man on a lonely motorcycle trip and his chance encounter with a voluptuous, young .....whoa! - not that BAMBI story! This is about safe motorcycling – about riding in deer country and trying to avoid a chance encounter with a deer – a furry forest critter.

All of us in Crossroads HOG live in deer country and we all know of the perils associated with that. One of our members asked me recently what the motorcyclist can do to avoid a collision with deer (and other such critters) so I thought it might be a good topic for the Safety Thought. Following are a few tips that I have compiled from reading, listening, and experience. I hope you find them useful.

Now the reigning wisdom tells us that deer are most active at dawn and dusk. I cannot verify that but I THINK it is a bad idea for us to take that so seriously as to let our guard down at all other times. I've seen deer on the road at all hours of the day and night in my neighborhood. *The ones I've collided with were all in daylight!* I can also assure you that those that are out at times other than dawn and dusk are just a stupid about motor vehicles as their brethren who show up at dawn and dusk. The real difference that matters to us is how hard they are to see. During dawn and dusk they are most difficult; in the dark, at least, our lights reflect off their eyes but we cannot see very far ahead and their fur is not reflective so there is little time at either of these times of day for us to properly react.

SO – when you are riding in any area that MIGHT have a deer population the primary thing you need to do is increase the time you have available to react. You do that by slowing down. Simple, eh? Scan as far ahead as you can paying particular attention to the sides of the road.

When you are approaching a blind curve to the right, slow down; position your bike as near to the center line as possible and stay there through the curve. This will give you the largest cushion of space (and space is time) between you and the sides of the road. *Yes – that is not the most expedient path through the curve but, remember, we are not trying to maximize speed here.* If the blind curve is to the left, and you have good visibility of the road's right shoulder area (and see no sign of critters) position yourself in the right third of your lane – again, maximizing your distance from that area you cannot see.

Light the Night! Use every light you have in the dark. Be courteous to the vehicles in front of you and those approaching you, of course, but, when you can, light the night. You can use the lights of the vehicle in front of you to see further. Position yourself to do that. You can even use the lights of the vehicle approaching you – critters will be dark

shadows – but be careful not to focus on those lights as you will cause your pupils to constrict and be temporarily night blind when the lights are gone.

Do not assume that the sound of your bike will make any difference to the critters!  
Do not assume that your horn will cause them to get out of the way!  
Do not assume that the critter staring directly at you sees you and is afraid!  
Do not assume that the critter will maintain direction!  
Do not assume that there is only one!  
Do not assume that the evasive maneuver you learned for dogs will work- it won't!

Everything I have offered so far is easily described as common sense.

Now – here's one last offering that is not so easy to buy into. If you find yourself in a situation where a collision with a deer is unavoidable (I understand there is not much time to think at that moment) HIT IT STRAIGHT ON. You and your bike have the best chance of minimizing injury to you that way. That goes against our natural instinct to try to avoid the collision.

Your bike is massive. You add to that mass. Together you and your bike have probably 3 times the mass of the deer.

You are moving toward that deer. Movement (velocity) time mass equals momentum. You have much more momentum than that deer.

Your bike is hard – not fleshy. The deer is fleshy – not as hard.

The front of your bike is pointed (sorta).

If you run the pointed end of a hard substance with a huge advantage in momentum into a fleshy mass, you might make it through! It has happened. If you are turned at all, you give up some of that momentum.

I'm not saying that you are going to blow through that situation without harm – chances of that are very, very slim. I'm telling you that you will maximize your chances of reducing your injury this way. It won't be pleasant but, at least, you'll have a better chance of telling the story later.

As always, I'm open to your thoughts and would enjoy the discussion.

For now, that's my safety thought for this month.

Mike “the safety guy”.