Things to SEE and Avoid..

Sr. Road Captain and Past President of Top Cats Illinois!

   This is the time of the year spring weather changes to summer and motorcyclists take to the road in large numbers. Animals small and large take to the roads also and become an increasing hazard again until late fall. You will find that taking the time to do your pre-ride risk assessment will pay off in safe cycling throughout the year.

Not only does a rider look at the weather, cycle, and the route. The animals the rider could encounter should also be considered. These are some basic tips for avoiding the animal that could injure or kill you while cruising through the countryside.

- ¨First and foremost, you should always wear approved safety gear; Helmet (Full-face is the best), gloves, long pants, brightly colored long-sleeve shirt/jacket (day), retro reflective upper-outer garment (night), over the ankle shoes (leather boots are the best), and any other ballistic type outer wear that protects your body.
- Heed deer-crossing signs, particularly in the seasons and times of day when deer are active. Slow down, use your high beam, and cover the brakes.
- Additional good, powerful driving lights are worth their weight in gold on a deserted road at night. Alternatively, fit a 100 – watt bulb as your high-beam.
- Flashing your headlights may break the spell that seems to cause deer to freeze.
- Revving your engine is a foreign sound to animals that may trigger their "Flight" mode. It sounds strangely close to a loud growl to them.
- If you are driving at night and see the oncoming headlights "twinkle", that is probably a moose or a deer intersecting the headlight beams. They are rarely alone and may be with young. Slow down and keep your eyes open.
- During the springtime, deer are attracted to the side of roads to lick the salt applied during the winter months to control iced roads.
- Watch for dips in a road where the surrounding land is wet, or a brook may cross under the road. These are usually trails used by animals. Transportation departments label some animal crossings.

- "S.E.E."- Search, Evaluate, and Execute a simple but powerful strategy taught in the Basic Riders Course (BRC). It should be employed as far in front of the rider as visibly possible when riding in areas where deer are common. The strategy will allow more time to stop if a deer is spotted. Stopping is the only appropriate maneuver to avoid a deer strike. Once the deer is spotted and the motorcycle comes to a stop the rider can proceed very slowly with caution. Again, making noise to scare their buddies away.
- Small animal motorcycle collisions with raccoons, possums and the like can also be deadly. A fast-moving motorcycle with the brakes locked is a recipe for disaster. A glancing hit can veer a motorcycle off the road. These animals are low and have a round body structure that doesn't "crush," causing the body to roll under an undercarriage. The proper position in this case is important the rider should ride across a small animal as he would ride over a small, fixed obstacle.
- When negotiating a small animal hazard, slow down as much as traffic and time will permit, approaching at a 90-degree angle if possible. Avoid target fixing by looking ahead once the path over the obstacle is determined. Rise slightly off the seat before reaching the obstacle keeping the knees bent and against the tank. Shift weight to the rear by slightly rolling on the throttle just before the front wheel makes contact with the small obstacle, remembering to not pull or jerk on the handle bars but….hold on firmly. Rolling on the throttle helps reduce the weight on the front wheel helping to climb over the obstacle. Upon contact with the obstacle roll off the throttle immediately so the rear wheel is not under power when it strikes the object.
- Finally, every encounter with an animal is different. There is no "Standard" method to react to animal encounters. Do the best you can, remember your options and, if all else fails, aim for the moving animal because….it won't be there when you get there!