

Animals and motor vehicles

By ROB SHAW

Thursday, July 21, 2005 Page A10 The Globe and Mail

"Right after the innovation of cars, they started running into wildlife," said Bruce Leeson, a senior environmental scientist at Parks Canada.

But as highways grow larger, cars travel faster, and animals have less space to roam, the problem of vehicle-to-animal accidents is increasing.

The most recent report from Transport Canada compiled provincial and Parks Canada data in 2003. It found:

An estimated 45,000 animals are hit by vehicles each year.

That number is rising roughly 10 to 15 per cent a year.

The average cost, including the value of the dead animal, is \$4,500 per accident.

The total cost to society is about \$200-million annually.

More than 80 per cent of the accidents involve deer.

Common methods of deterring accidents, such as highway signs, reduced speed limits, public awareness campaigns, reflector prisms, ultrasonic whistles, fences and highway lighting are costly and mostly ineffective.

Parks Canada has found success in combating the problem in Banff National Park, where it has constructed 23 "green bridges" over the top of, and below, a four-lane, 45-kilometre stretch of the Trans-Canada Highway.

The bridges have reduced accidents by 82 per cent.

Since 1996, cameras have recorded more than 65,000 animals of all shapes and sizes crossing the road using the bridges.