SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

App Helps People Collect Animals Killed on Roads

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The American state of Wyoming has created a tool to help citizens collect animals killed in road accidents.

The tool permits people to legally claim the animals, known as roadkill, for food. The program also aims to collect data to help officials decide on measures to improve road safety.

State wildlife and highway officials added the system to a state-operated **app** that provides information on road conditions and traffic.

Users can register sightings of roadkill accidents and seek permission to remove the animals within the state's rules and guidelines. Wyoming defines "road killed wildlife" as any deer, antelope, elk, moose, wild bison or wild turkey that was killed in an accidental vehicle crash.

State rules require the full animal remains to be collected. For safety reasons, roadkill may not be picked up after dark, along interstate highways or in areas where road repairs are happening.

The app provides state officials with data on the number of roadkill accidents and where the crashes are happening. This helps wildlife and transportation officials decide where to put up warning signs for animal crossings.

Officials estimate at least 6,000 animals are killed on state roads in Wyoming each year. "That's quite a lot," said Sara DiRienzo. She is a spokesperson for the Wyoming Game and Fish Department. She added, "And we know that the majority of those are mule deer."

Mule deer live in the western half of North America and are generally bigger than the whitetail deer found across the whole continent. Wyoming is home to about 400,000 mule deer. The animals are widely hunted across the state. But dry climate and disappearing living environments have led to a nearly 30 percent reduction in the state's mule deer population over the past 30 years.

"Mule deer already are struggling because of a number of **factors**. Roadkill **collisions** don't help that," DiRienzo said.

Another problem is that other animals that feed on roadkill risk getting hit on roads, as well. These animals often include coyotes, eagles, skunks and others.

Jaden Bales is a spokesperson for the Wyoming Wildlife Federation. He supported new legislation last year on the use of roadkill. Bales was recently informed of a deer that had been killed on a road not far from his home in the town of Lander. He used the app to report and collect the deer. He then processed the animal's remains for food.

Bales said some people might think it is acceptable to leave roadkill where it is so that the "circle of life" can be completed. In this way, other creatures show up to feed on the dead animals.

But this, he added, presents big risks to the other animals. "Whenever you've got roadkill, it is really dangerous for any of the **critters** who come and try to eat it."

I'm Bryan Lynn.

The Associated Press reported this story. Bryan Lynn adapted the report for VOA Learning English.

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Words in This Story

app – *n.* a computer program that performs a special function, usually found on mobile phones

factor – *n.* one of the things that has an effect on a particular situation, decision, event, etc.

collision – *n.* a crash

critter – *n.* a living creature such as an animal