

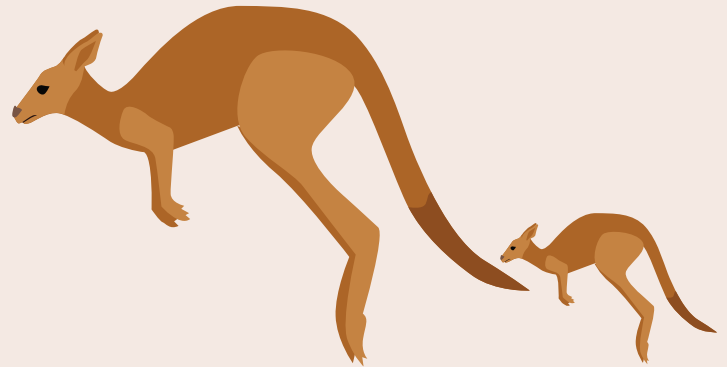
COUNTRY ROAD DRIVING

FACT SHEET

Rural and remote areas account for 65% of all road fatalities in Australia [1]. Driving on country roads pose special challenges, from unsealed roads, to wildlife.

Trips in areas with sparse populations encounter different road conditions from those in urban areas. Some roads may be covered by sand or mud and depending on the weather or wildlife some routes may be closed.

Unsealed roads, poor shoulders, and corrugations on single lane bitumen roads demand additional attention from drivers to navigate carefully and drive to the conditions.






THE ISSUE

Some of the common characteristics shared by crashes in rural and remote areas are [2] [5]:

-  High travel speeds
-  Long travelling distances
-  Varied and unfamiliar road environments (i.e. unsealed roads, mud, natural barriers such as creeks)
-  Variation in vehicle type (i.e. agricultural vehicles)
-  Driver fatigue and monotony

When do rural crashes occur? [5]

-  Most casualty crashes occur during daylight hours
-  Highest number of crashes occur between 2pm and 6pm
-  Mostly occur on weekends

Causes of crashes on unsealed roads [6]

-  Loss-of-control of the vehicle
-  Drivers engaging in risky behaviour (including alcohol)
-  Drivers failing to keep left
-  Driver inexperience
-  Poor signage and delineation
-  Restricted visibility by other vehicles, vegetation, or extreme weather events.
-  Road surface and cross-section issues caused by changes in weather or surface particularities, such as corrugation.

ANIMAL COLLISIONS

Every year in Australia, thousands of collisions occur between motor vehicles and animals [7]. Animal collisions can not only result in damage to the vehicle but may also cause injury or even death to both the driver and the animal. Animals, such as kangaroos, can be unpredictable when a car passes them, especially at night [8]. According to one major insurer in Australia, animal strikes already account for 5% of all claim incidents, with most reports indicating early mornings (between 5 and 7am) and dusk, especially during winter, as the riskiest hours.

The most common animals that drivers encountered on Australian roads in 2018 were kangaroos, followed by wallabies, wombats, dogs, emus, foxes and cows [8].

Vehicle insurance claims to Zurich Financial Services Australia from 2016-2018 show that New South Wales, followed by Victoria and Western Australia, incurred the highest costs due to animal collisions. New South Wales incurred over \$5,000,000 in insurance claim costs in 2018 alone [8].

Common factors which may increase the risk of an animal collision include [8]:



Driving on rural roads where animals are more common.



Driving at dawn, dusk, or night-time (when animals typically come out to graze).



Driving close to agricultural watering points such as dams, troughs and tanks, where animals drinking can be startled by an approaching vehicle.



Driving a motorcycle. Without the protection of a cabin there is higher exposure to injury.



Speed zones of 100 km/h or greater, which do not allow for appropriate reaction times.



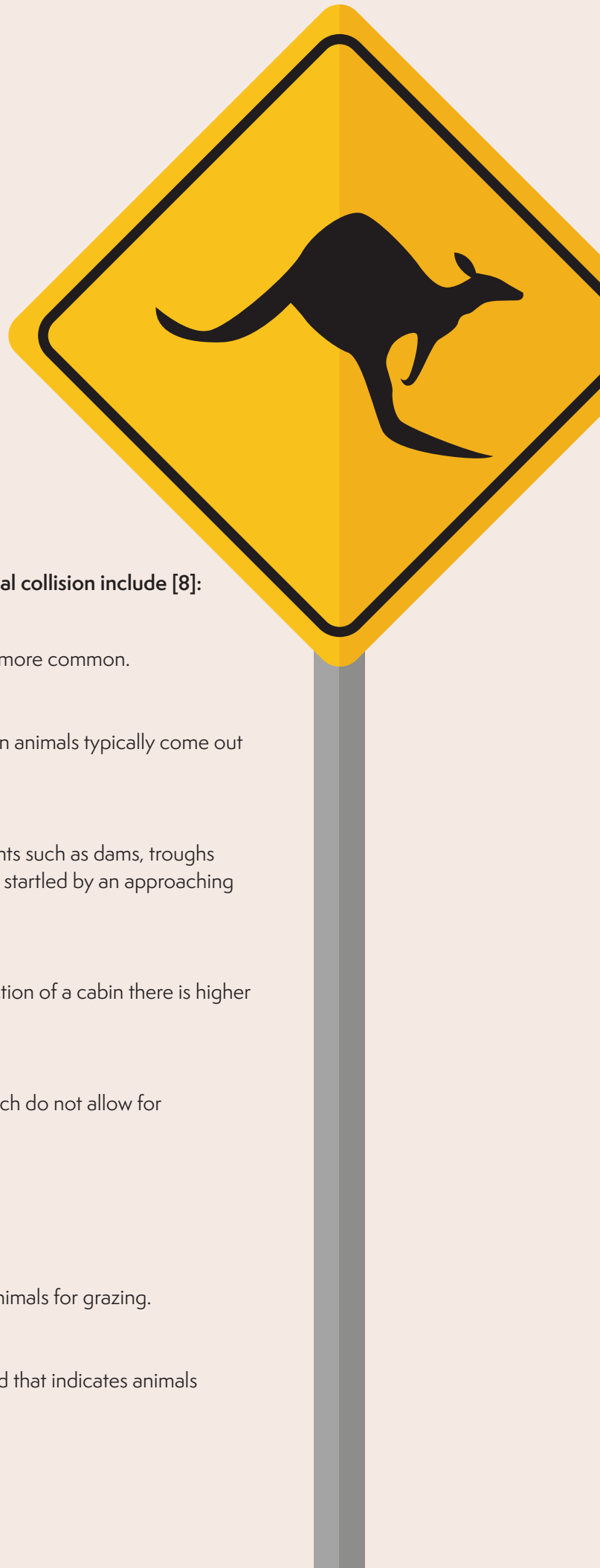
Curved roads with reduced visibility.



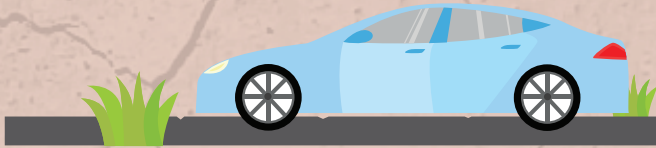
Roadsides with vegetation that attracts animals for grazing.



Fresh animal waste on the side of the road that indicates animals frequent the area.



RECOMMENDATIONS



RURAL AND REMOTE AREAS [2] [5] [9] [10]:

Plan your route

Carefully and in detail.

Obtain a printed map

Place it in the vehicle.

Allow adequate travel time

To avoid the urge to exceed safe travel speeds.

Obey the road rules

Always respect the speed limit.

Be alert for wildlife, livestock and pedestrians

Especially at dawn and dusk.

Ensure there is someone who you can check in with along the journey

i.e. when you start, finish and along the way.

Be mindful of isolation in remote areas

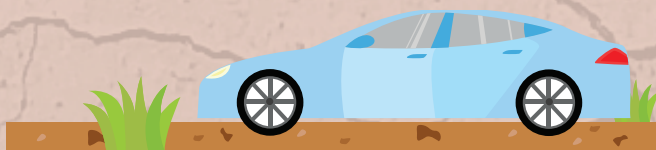
Ensure you have sufficient water, check phone coverage, print emergency and assistance numbers.

Know the local knowledge

Some roads are mostly used for agricultural movement or activities that require temporary closure.

Ensure your vehicle is roadworthy and well-maintained

Take breaks every 2 hours



UNSEALED ROADS [6]

Be mindful of the weather

The weather will determine the type of road you will find in the journey. Dry weather can create dusty conditions and limit your visibility, while wet weather can make roads muddy, slippery and boggy.

Slow down

Dust or thick vegetation may be disguising an oncoming vehicle, potholes, loose gravel or slippery mud patches.

Turn on your headlights where visibility is poor

Consider stopping if you can't see the road in front of you.



ANIMAL COLLISIONS

Assess the road ahead

Assess not only the road but also the roadside and the environment you will be driving in.

Avoid travelling in rural areas at dawn, dusk and night-time

Most animals shelter during the heat of the day and come out at night to graze.

Call the local council

A simple call to the local council at your destination, asking them for advice, can often be the most prudent guidance to inform you of animal movements in the area.

Be vigilant when you spot movement

Use your high beam to spot animals from a distance if there are no other drivers ahead.

Look out for wildlife road signs

Reduce your speed and deactivate cruise control when you see a wildlife/stock on road warning sign.

Slow down

If you see an animal on the side of the road, slow right down and be aware of the animal's behaviour as you pass it. Do not exit the vehicle.

Avoid swerving

If an animal crosses the road, or is already on the road, avoid swerving. Hold to a straight line even if it takes you directly into the animal. If a collision is inevitable, all you can do is reduce your speed by braking to lessen the force of the impact.