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NEWS RELEASE

NEW BILLBOARD NEAR CHASE REMINDS DRIVERS TO WATCH FOR WILDLIFE

KAMLOOPS, B.C. (Dec. 7, 2004) – The Wildlife-Vehicle Accident Prevention Program (WVAPP) is proud to announce an expansion of its campaign to educate the driving public about the dangers of wildlife-vehicle accidents and how they can be prevented. Another billboard with a safety message has been located beside the TransCanada Highway near Chase B.C., where an estimated 3,200 vehicles will view the billboard every day. The billboard says, “Watch for Wildlife – Use Caution!” and is intended to remind drivers to pay attention to more traditional wildlife warning signs on the highway, and continue to watch out for wildlife on the road.

High-risk areas in the province determined the location of other billboards located near Dawson Creek, Grand Forks, and Fernie BC. “WVAPP used the B.C. Ministry of Transportation Wildlife Accident Reporting System (WARS) data to determine highways that traditionally have the highest rates of wildlife-vehicle collisions,” says Darren Bennett, WVAPP Advisor.

However, WARS data only records animals found dead beside the road. What is not recorded is the number of animals that are hit and die away from the roadside. “Our best estimate,” says Leonard Sielecki, WARS Manager, B.C. Ministry of Transportation, “is that for every animal recorded as killed due to a wildlife-vehicle collision, three more are not recorded by our data collection system”. In B.C., this means that collisions with vehicles result in a staggering 17,000 animal deaths per year.

The Wildlife-Vehicle Accident Prevention Program reminds drivers that fall and winter are high-risk times for wildlife-vehicle collisions. Food, water, and habitat are more accessible in the valley bottoms, and wildlife tends to move toward these areas in the fall and winter when forage higher up in the mountains is depleted. Unfortunately, many road corridors are also built in valley bottoms, and when motorists and wildlife use the same travel corridors, it leads to increased collisions. Also in the fall, animal movement during mating season results in more animals near the road, and in the winter, wildlife are attracted to roadsides because of roadside salt deposits and ease of movement.

WVAPP “Hints for the Highway” while driving this winter are:

- Slow Down and Obey all Posted Signs – collision avoidance and driver response time are improved at lower speeds.
- Drive Defensively – actively watch for wildlife in the ditch, on the road shoulder, and in the right of way, particularly between dusk and dawn.
- Be Alert – animals are unpredictable, often travel in groups, and may bolt unexpectedly.
- Use Your Vehicle – clean your headlights, use your high beams when safe to do so, and always wear your seatbelt.

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