



**Highway Maintenance Manual**  
**Chapter 07 Roadside Management**  
**Section 15 Wildlife**  
**Subject 01 Carcass Removal**

**Bureau of Highway Maintenance**  
**July 2025**

## **1.0 General**

Domestic and wild animals are often hit and killed by motor vehicles on state trunk highways. Large animals lying on or near highways are hazards when left on the shoulder or in clear zones and are to be removed promptly. Removal may include pickup with offsite disposal or roadside abandonment in rural conditions. Roadside abandonment is when the carcass is moved away from the roadway and left in the right of way, out of sight from passing motorists.

## **2.0 Car Killed Deer (CKD) Remains**

The Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) issues and manages Car Killed Deer (CKD) contracts to private vendors or counties to manage deer carcasses. The contract requires vendors to dispose of deer carcasses on Interstates, U.S. highways and state highways, no later than two business days after receiving report. (CKD contractors remove deer only. Other animal types are to be addressed as outlined in subsequent sections of this policy.)

- Counties are responsible for removing deer carcasses on county highways
- Towns, villages and cities are responsible for removing deer carcasses on their local roads

Report disposal and removal requests to the following based on the CKD location.

- For county roads, contact the county highway department
- For town, village and city roads, contact the local municipality
- For Interstates, U.S. highways and state highways, report deer carcasses to county sheriff's department.

Vendors are expected to dispose of deer with the outlined following exceptions.

The following deer carcasses are **not** the responsibility of the CKD contractor per the contract:

1. Deer carcasses on the road or highway.
2. Deer carcasses that require the contractor to park on the road or in a lane of traffic.
3. Deer carcasses that would require the contractor to park on the side of the road and then cross the road on foot to retrieve the carcass.
4. Deer carcasses in construction zones because safety is compromised due to circumstances such as lack of a shoulder.
5. Deer carcasses that have been properly disposed of through roadside abandonment.
6. In urban areas where the stopping area between the edge of the passing lane and the concrete barrier is less than 16 feet. (Standard highway lane width is 12 feet). Carcasses in these locations are not the responsibility of the contractor; instead, they are the responsibility of the local county highway department. County highway departments are better equipped to handle these conditions.
7. Deer carcasses reported on county and local roads are not the responsibility of the contractor - only carcasses reported on state trunk highways are the responsibility of the contractor. If deer carcasses are reported to you that appear to be on county or local roads, you must communicate back to the reporting entity that you will not be picking up the carcasses, after following all communication requirements listed in the Communication section.

Carcasses in these locations are not the responsibility of the contractor; instead, they are the responsibility of the county highway department or active construction project. County highway departments are better equipped to handle these conditions.

On busy highways when pickup is difficult, the contractor may ask for law enforcement assistance to make the pickup safer.

## 2.1 Pickup Specifications

Contractors are not required to pick up deer carcasses on weekends or on holidays but may choose to do so. Holidays are defined as the following: New Year's Day, Memorial Day, July 4th, Labor Day, Thanksgiving and the Friday following Thanksgiving, Christmas Eve, Christmas Day and New Year's Eve.

The exception to the two-business day rule is July 4<sup>th</sup>. The contractor is not required to pick up a deer carcass on July 4<sup>th</sup>, but if the two-business day period were to fall on July 4<sup>th</sup> then the contractor only has one business day to pick up the carcass. This is because July 4<sup>th</sup> is in the middle of summer.

| Day Carcass Reported to Contractor | Day Carcass shall be picked up (by end of day) |
|------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|
| Monday                             | Wednesday                                      |
| Tuesday                            | Thursday                                       |
| Wednesday                          | Friday                                         |
| Thursday                           | Monday                                         |
| Friday                             | Tuesday                                        |
| Saturday                           | Tuesday                                        |
| Sunday                             | Tuesday                                        |

Examples of Holiday exceptions:

- Report Tuesday before Thanksgiving Weekend – Pickup by the end of Monday the following week.
- Report Friday before Memorial Day (Monday) – Pickup by the end of Wednesday.
- Report Monday before New Year Holidays on Wednesday and Thursday – Pickup by the end of Friday.
- Report Monday before Wednesday July 4<sup>th</sup> Holiday – Pickup by the end of Tuesday. (Contractors may pick up the carcass on July 4<sup>th</sup>, but it is not required.)

Pickup Safety:

- The contractor is expected to equip all vehicles with lights or lamps required by Section 347.26, Stats., and shall operate such lights or lamps when stopping adjacent to a public highway.
- The person doing the work shall wear personal protective gear while working in the right of way and shall have operating flashing emergency lights on the vehicle activated whenever they are stopped along the roadway.

## 2.2 Disposal Specifications

The contractor is authorized to use or dispose of the deer carcasses in the following ways. The disposal option depends on whether the county the carcass is located in is affected by Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD). The preferred methods of disposal are listed first and follow in order of preference.

CWD-affected counties as identified in NR 10.41 (3)(c)

1. DNR-licensed landfill
2. Incineration, at a temperature acceptable to the Department
3. Chemical digestion – sodium hydroxide
4. Roadside abandonment

**Note:** Composting or Land Spreading of Deer Carcasses in the CWD zone is prohibited.

Non-CWD-affected counties as identified in NR 10.41 (3)(c)

1. Rendering
2. DNR-licensed landfill
3. Roadside abandonment
4. Incineration, at a temperature acceptable to the Department
5. Chemical digestion – sodium hydroxide

Roadside abandonment is when the carcass is moved away from the roadway and left in right of way, out of sight from passing motorists.

While there are concerns of smell and unsightliness, these are short lived as the carcass naturally decomposes. This option allows natural processes to occur and may be beneficial by providing food for scavenging wildlife. In order to avoid vehicle collisions with animals feeding on the carcasses, the deer carcasses should be moved to the edge of the right of way. Areas that obscure the visibility of the carcass from the traveling public is preferred, including the unmowed portion of the right of way or where woody vegetation exists. If the right-of-way has a

number of deer carcasses in one spot, the contractor may not add to the pile. The deer carcass must be disposed of as if it was in an urban setting.

Roadside abandonment is not allowed under the following conditions:

- Deer carcasses may not be abandoned on the right-of-way if it is within ¼ mile of a residence.
- Deer carcasses may not be abandoned if they are in an urban area.
- Contractors may not pick up deer carcasses in an urban setting or near a residence and dispose of them in the adjacent right-of-way. This violation may be grounds for dismissal from the contract.

### **3.0 Small Animal Remains**

The remains of small animals found on roadways or roadsides should either be removed and disposed of in a sanitary landfill site or buried in a convenient location. If the remains are located in a rural, undeveloped area where odors will not be offensive, they may be discarded in thick roadside vegetation in such a manner that the remains will not be visible to passing motorists. The remains of small animals are not the responsibility of WisDOT CKD contractors.

### **4.0 Large Animal Remains**

The public and county staff should report dead deer to the county sheriff's department, so a contractor can be called to pick up the deer in that county. WisDOT staff should contact the Region Maintenance Supervisor for the current list of contractors. Elk should be reported to the local Department of Natural Resources (DNR) wildlife biologist, who will arrange for disposal. Bear should be reported to the local game warden. DNR contacts may be found on the [DNR Regional Office](#) web page.

The responsibility for the removal of large domestic animals (e.g. cattle, horses, etc.) killed in the road lies with the owner of the animal. If the location of the animal presents a safety hazard, the county highway department should relocate it to a safe spot until it can be removed from the right of way.

### **5.0 Remains of Family Pets**

When animal remains include an identifier, such as a registration tag, indicating that the animal was a family pet, an attempt may be made to return the remains to the owner, if the owner's contact information can be determined. If the owner cannot be located or does not wish to claim the remains, the carcass should be disposed of as described above.

### **6.0 Threatened and Endangered Species**

There is no requirement that threatened or endangered species killed by vehicles be reported to another agency. However, the DNR would like to be informed of any threatened or endangered reptiles or amphibians that are found dead on the right of way, so that the species and location can be added to their Natural Heritage Inventory. The DNR's [Working List of Reptiles and Amphibians](#) can be found on their web site. As a courtesy, report occurrences to the Natural Heritage Inventory zoologist at 101 S. Webster St. ER/6, Madison, Wisconsin 53702, phone (608) 266-0924.

### **7.0 DNR Warden Contacts and Counties**

The DNR warden contacts and the counties they serve may be found on the [DNR Regional Office](#) web page. Call the main phone number listed and the receptionist will connect you to the appropriate contact person.