Potential Road Hazards: Animals

If you live in a city, the largest animal you may encounter on the street is your neighbor’s Labrador retriever. Even that dog could be a problem for drivers if the dog darts into the street in front of your vehicle or if it chases your car.

But any time you drive in a rural or wooded area—even in the suburbs—you may need to worry about wild animals on the road.

1. Practice driving in rural or wooded areas
Ask your teen to drive you through the country, parks, suburbs and some smaller towns and cities. Keep a look out for animals such as deer, skunks and coyotes. Depending on where you live, there is plenty to look out for and avoid. While driving, remind teens to always scan the road and also to keep an eye on the roadside. Wooded areas and a lack of streetlights can make it easier to miss things. Fortunately, there are some practices to keep your teen safer.

2. How to stay safe
   • Reducing speed is always a good first step. Open and empty roads often tempt teens to speed.
   • At night, teens may think rural roads are safe because they don’t see headlights. But as you know, many threats don’t come equipped with lights.
   • Driving farther from the wooded areas will give them more time and space to react to animals that may appear. For example, if there are two lanes, drive in the one farthest from the wooded area.