



Safe Driving on Country Roads

Read our guide to driving on country roads which provides tips to help you avoid the hazards and stay safe whilst driving on rural roads.

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1. Speed limits, not targets

Designated speed limits are provided as a maximum legal guide, however situations such as sharp bends, unexpected hazards and changing conditions often mean that drivers should determine their speed by the circumstances and not the limits. You might know the road like the back of your hand, but you never know what's waiting around the corner – animals in the road, a slow tractor or cyclists.

2. Winding roads

When driving on winding roads, slow your car ahead of the bend to a speed which will allow you to stop should a hazard emerge around the corner. Braking as you enter a bend will likely mean that you are going too fast and not in full control.

Look ahead and use tree lines, telegraph poles and hedges to determine where the road is going.

3. Flooding danger

After heavy rainfall, roads in rural areas often become flooded. Driving through floodwater should be avoided if possible, as it is difficult to determine the water's depth and what debris might be under the surface.

If you have no option other than to drive through floodwater, do so at a slow pace and be prepared to reverse out, should it become too deep.

Always check your brakes after driving through deep water and if floodwater reaches the lower level of the doors, do not attempt to drive until a mechanic has looked at it.

4. Mud on the road

The prevalence of farm vehicles on rural roads inevitably means that there will sometimes be mud from the fields left on the highway. Mud, along with wet leaves that can accumulate on the road, can be incredibly slippery in wet conditions and therefore you should exercise caution and not travel round corners too quickly.

5. Manure on the road

Anyone driving on a rural road should expect to often share it with horses and their riders. Spotting a fresh pile of manure should alert you to the possibility that horses are not far away. Drivers should slow down and be prepared to stop if necessary. If you do need to pass a horse, stay at least a car's width away and avoid sudden noises or movements.

6. Limited vision

Hedges and overgrown trees can make it difficult to clearly see the road ahead. This difficulty is increased in the summer, when there may also be more ramblers walking on the roads. Assess your speed according to your surroundings.

7. Reacting to wildlife

A natural instinct might be to swerve to avoid a rabbit or pheasant, but this is dangerous. Slight damage to your car is better than a serious accident due to losing control of your vehicle.

Larger animals present a bigger problem. Braking to reduce the severity of the impact is advisable and sounding your horn may also startle them to get out of the way.

8. Livestock delays

Farmers often need to use the roads to move livestock to and from their fields, usually at dawn and at the end of the day. If the road is blocked by livestock the best thing to do is stop the car, turn off your engine and wait patiently.

9. Farm traffic

Tractors and farm machinery on the road can be frustrating for drivers caught up in a queue. However, usually a tractor will not be travelling too far up the road, so it won't be long before the road is clear again. If you do decide to overtake, make absolutely sure the road ahead is clear and consider any junctions ahead that motorists may pull out from.

Due to their size, tractors might swing out to the right before turning left, be aware of this before making the decision to overtake.