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Device keeps deer off roadways

By **JASON HARRIS**
 Burlington County Times

SPRINGFIELD, N.J. — A stretch of Saylor's Pond Road near Fort Dix is serving as the test site for a device that may prevent collisions between cars and deer.



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Mt. Laurel-based Jafa Technologies is testing the Wildlife Crossing Guard on a half-mile stretch of Saylor's Pond Road, east of Georgetown-Juliustown Road near Route 68 in Burlington County.

In the approximately two weeks since the 38 guards have been in place, they appear to be working, officials said.

"We had 53 reported deer-related accidents last year," said Police Chief Kenneth Gerber. "We have not had any deer accidents in that area since [the devices] have been in place."

Auto collisions with deer can have serious, even deadly, consequences. Gerber said there was at least one fatality caused from a deer-vehicle crash in Camden County a few years ago.

"We've had them where the deer came over the hood and through the windshield," Gerber said.

Ed Mulka, project manager for Jafa, said he chose this section of road because it's close to several wooded areas and deer feeding sites, there's a curve that limits visibility and Fort Dix, where hunting is forbidden, is nearby.

"Deer are smart," he said. "They know to go where it's safe."

The guards, each about the size of a brick, operate only at night when deer are

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most likely to be on the move. When a vehicle's headlights hit a sensor inside the guard, the device flashes a blue light at the deer and emits a high-pitched whistle that Mulka said sounds like a groundhog in distress.

"Research indicates that is something deer and other animals are

sensitive to," he said.

Because the devices are only activated by vehicles, Mulka said deer can't get used to them.

"Deer are creatures of habit," he said. "If you put something up to deter them ... at some point they get desensitized to it. They won't get used to this."

Mulka said an Austrian company called ITPE makes the device and tested it first in that country with great success. The real test locally will come later this year in Springfield, when deer travel a lot while searching for mates. Still, from what he has seen so far, Mulka believes the device holds great promise.

"With both the results in Austria and here ... I'm very encouraged," he said.

Jason Harris can be reached at jharris@phillyBurbs.com.

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