

Recipes from disaster: a novel approach to reduce road trauma arising from wildlife-vehicle collisions on Kangaroo Island, South Australia

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Background

Wildlife-vehicle collisions are a common occurrence on rural roads across Australia, with evidence suggesting injuries from unsuccessful wildlife avoidance manoeuvres (predominantly rollover) are more serious than those resulting from collision alone.

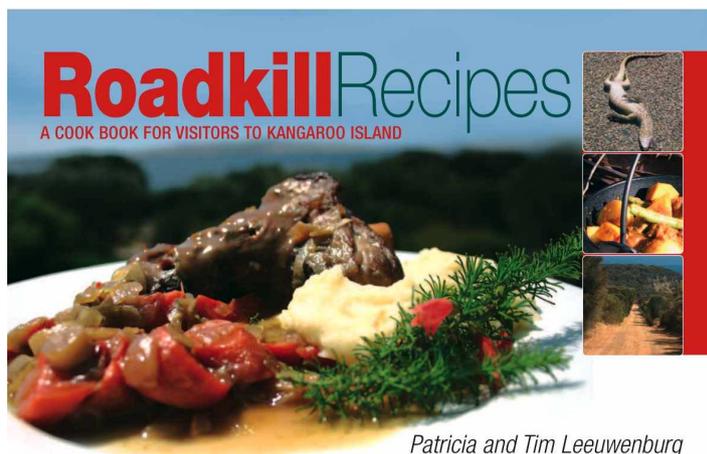
Kangaroo Island is the jewel in South Australia's ecotourism crown, with 160,000 tourist visitors per annum. Unfortunately the juxtaposition of abundant native wildlife with drivers travelling at high speed over long distances on unsealed roads, often results in a significant burden of road-related trauma for the local medical service. This burden is not necessarily borne out by State road crash statistics, which do not always reliably record crash cause.

Methods

Motor vehicle crash data were analysed retrospectively from case records at Kangaroo Island Hospital (the sole hospital on Kangaroo Island) for the period 1993-2003. Crashes involving wildlife were identified, including vehicle vs. wildlife as well as crashes resulting from wildlife avoidance manoeuvres.

Results & Summary

Previous attempts at roadkill mitigation strategies have been largely ineffective. After an exhaustive review, reliable crash statistics were derived and formed the basis of a GP-led driver education programme targeted at tourists, highlighting the dangers of rural roads and in particular the possibility of wildlife-vehicle collisions. Recognising that tourists are unlikely to read road safety pamphlets, the message was conveyed within the novel cookbook 'Roadkill recipes – a cookbook for visitors to Kangaroo Island'. Eighteen thousand copies were sold in eighteen months, with part profits contributed to both road safety and conservation programmes on Kangaroo Island.



Preliminary data suggest that the number of wildlife-vehicle collisions resulting in human injury has fallen from 37.2 per annum (1993-2003) to 12.6 per annum (2004-7). These results, and the methods behind them, are discussed within the broad framework of rural doctor's role in injury prevention within their community.