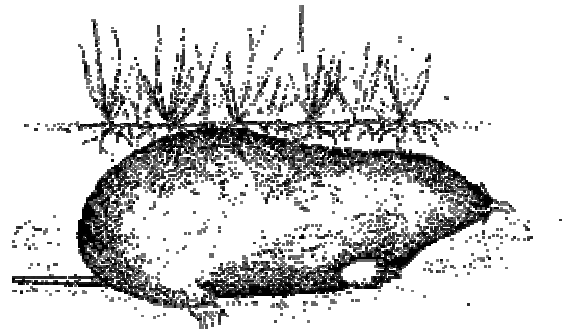


Moles

Moles belong to the group of mammals that are insect eaters. They are often incorrectly called "rodents," the group or family of animals such as mice, rats, and squirrels. There are different species of moles in the United States. However, the common mole is the most widespread in the East and is the most likely mole encountered in Delaware.

Description and Habits

The common mole is a small, gray, furry, burrowing mammal about 5 to 8 inches in length. Its head has a long, tapering snout. It lacks external ears and has tiny, barely detectable eyes. The most distinguishing feature of the mole is its stubby, broad, shovel-like front feet, which are well adapted to digging.



Moles live underground and seldom venture out of their burrows. They are most active early in the morning and late in the evening. The ridges produced by their burrowing plainly indicate their presence. Most of the tunneling is done in a random search for food, so many of the tunnels are seldom re-used. This is important to remember when trapping moles. Their more permanent or "active" tunnels usually run along fences, borders or other protected places that lead to feeding areas.

Moles feed almost exclusively on soil insects -- earthworms and grubs are the most important food sources. Because they eat insect pests, they can be beneficial. A mole has a tremendous appetite and can consume nearly half its own weight in food daily. Roots, bulbs and tubers of plants are not target food sources, but may be damaged indirectly as moles dig through the ground in search of grubs and earthworms. Plant parts may subsequently be eaten by mice, which use mole tunnels for protection and as avenues to food supplies.

Control

Often there is no need to control moles. However, when they become a nuisance, satisfactory control measures are available. The two most promising methods are trapping and reducing insect populations in the yard so the moles forage for food elsewhere.

Trapping

Two types of traps are generally available: harpoon and choker loop traps. (See manufacturer's instructions.) When properly placed in the yard, these traps provide the simplest and most effective means of control. For trapping to succeed, it is vital to select a frequently used tunnel. To locate active tunnels, cave in short sections of several runways by pushing down on them with your foot. Be sure to indicate each site with a stick or other marker. Moles are very suspicious and will avoid areas that appear odd, so don't disturb the tunnels more than necessary. Check each marked site and place traps in the tunnels which have been rebuilt. If there is no catch within a day or two, change locations and reset the trap.

Using Insecticides to Reduce Food Supply

Moles invade areas in search of food, so they can be discouraged by your treating turf to reduce insect populations. However, don't expect moles to immediately leave; time and patience are required. Several insecticide materials are available for grub control. For further details on grub control, see [Extension Bulletin HYG-17, Lawn Insects and Their Control](#). Water the treated area thoroughly following application of insecticides for best grub control.

Other Control Options

Fencing small, isolated areas such as flower beds can be very effective. Bury fencing at least 12 inches, and bend the above-ground portion outward at a 90 degree angle for an additional 10 inches.

Repellents such as mothballs inserted into the tunnels may drive moles elsewhere, but this method is only practical in a small area. Poison baits and gassing are dangerous and generally ineffective. They should not be used around a home yard.

Poison baits are too dangerous to children, pets, and other non-target animals, and should not be used around a home yard. Drowning moles with a soap/castor oil mixture or use of ultrasonic vibration devices are not effective in eliminating moles.