

Moles

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Moles are found in home landscape settings. They are mostly a nuisance but might cause some damage when tunneling around plants. They do not feed on plants.

Moles are 4 to 6 inches long with grey or brown fur. Their front feet are wide, turn outward, and have webbed toes. These paddle-like limbs help them move through soil, burrowing as fast as one foot per minute.

Moles burrow to feed on soil critters with earthworms making up 70 percent of their diet. While moles burrow year-round, it peaks May through June. They live alone but the burrow systems of moles may be connected. However, they rarely exceed 3 moles per acre.

There are two types of burrows. Both are visible on the soil surface creating a nuisance or possible walking hazard. Feeding burrows wander in no apparent direction as the mole searches for food. Travel burrows tend to be long and straight.

Moles create soil mounds when burrowing deeper or beneath something. The mounds are 4 to 6 inches across and cone-shaped in contrast to pocket gopher mounds that are fan-shaped and greater than one foot across.

Like all wildlife, moles tend to be where they find suitable habitat. They prefer cool moist soil near the surface and build dens and permanent travel burrows in the shade of trees, fences, buildings or other structures. And there tends to be more insects and earthworms in cool, moist soil.

Moles are considered more of a nuisance than causing economic damage. Mounds may interfere with mowing so rake them to spread the soil. Raised tunnels can be tamped down and watered to help the grass re-root.

While burrowing may disrupt plant roots and cause stress, they rarely feed on plants. Voles may use mole tunnels to travel and this rodent does feed on plant roots, bulbs, tubers and tree bark and wood. Moles may get blamed for plant damage when it is actually voles doing the feeding.

If needed, mole management can be done with the use of traps, repellants or toxic baits. Applying an insecticide to kill soil insects does not work, especially as earthworms make up the majority of a moles diet. And killing some insects may increase tunneling since they have to search further for food.

The use of electronic devices, chewing gum, windmills, used cat litter, and most home remedies will not work. If moles need to be managed, use proven methods. A great guide for this is UNL's Nebguide titled *Moles and Their Control*. Search for it online for tips on effectively trapping moles or using repellants and toxic baits.

For trapping, recommended traps are harpoon, scissor jaw and choker-loop types. These need to be set in surface travel burrows, not feeding burrows. The Nebguide provides helpful tips on the use of traps.

The main repellants for moles are products containing castor oil and labeled for use against moles. It is important to follow label directions. Repellants must be watered in and keep in mind their effectiveness is short lived.

Two toxic baits are labeled for moles. Kaput and Talpirid. Kaput is a gel squirted into the tunnels. Talpirid or Tomcat is a synthetic worm that contains the toxic bait. Again, for safety, it is important to follow label directions. Toxic baits can be harmful to pets, birds and children.