

MOLES

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If it seems the mole population in your yard has had a sudden surge because mole burrowing has increased, this may not be the case.

Moles live alone but the burrow systems of more than one mole may be connected. Even so, moles rarely exceed a density of three moles per acre.

Moles tend to burrow along structures, fence-lines, and walkways. They feed while burrowing just below the surface of the ground where their preferred food of earthworms, ants and other insects are abundant.

They burrow year-round, with burrowing typically peaking May through June. During fall, burrowing may also increase as moles prepare for winter.

Moles have a voracious appetite and can eat from 70 up to 100 percent of their weight daily. Adults weigh three to five ounces. While feeding, they can burrow as fast as one foot per minute and a single mole can create an extensive network of burrows.

The damage moles cause in lawns and gardens is more of a nuisance than an economic concern. Mounds and surface burrows may interfere with mowing, and activities of moles may disturb root systems and kill grass if it is not tamped down and watered when raised tunnels are first noticed.

The maze of burrows created by moles can provide cover and travel lanes for other small mammals. Voles, deer mice, and house mice may live and travel in the underground tunnels created by moles.

It is these rodents that are responsible for damage to bulbs, seeds and garden plants; however, moles often get blamed. Plants are not eaten by moles. Moles are carnivores and eat earthworms and insects.

Like most wild animals, moles exist where they find suitable habitat. They prefer areas shaded by trees with cool, moist soils near the surface. Permanent burrows and dens are usually in areas protected by trees, stumps, fence rows, buildings, or sidewalks.

Quality habitat for feeding and an area for constructing permanent runways (also known as burrows and tunnels) must be available for moles to become numerous, even though they rarely exceed three per acre.

If moles are a nuisance you want to attempt to control, trapping and the use of toxic baits containing Kaput® or Talpirid® are recommended. In some cases, repellants containing castor oil have proven effective for a very short time.

One practice that does not control moles, and which can end up increasing mole burrowing, is the application of an insecticide to control their food source. This does not stop moles from burrowing and it is an irresponsible use of a pesticide.

For information on effectively trapping moles, refer to Nebraska Extension's NebGuide on moles and their control found at extensionpubs.unl.edu.

Source: NebGuide G1538