PURDUE EXTENSION

News Article

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Control moles most effectively using one of two methods

Evidently it's time for my annual news article on mole control, because the calls are coming in on the subject.

Let's keep it simple this year. From a research-based perspective, Purdue Extension generally recommends one of two methods of mole control as being most effective. Most other methods would be considered either inconsistent, or ineffective. It is also evident that many home remedies exist, which we do not recommend. No matter what method is chosen, nothing provides 100% results.

Trapping is the most reliable method of mole control. However, it does take practice, patience, persistence and perhaps a bit of luck. I often describe it as both an art and a science. Mole traps are available at several local retailers. Harpoon traps, scissor traps, and choker traps are available. The harpoon trap has the trigger placed on the soil surface over a slightly depressed mole run. When triggered, spikes impale the mole vertically down. Scissor traps are placed in the mole run. A trigger in the middle of the trap enables capture of the mole via scissor-like jaws whether he advances or retreats. Also called a choker loop trap, the choker trap literally captures and chokes the offending mole when the trigger is activated. Choose a well-used mole run to set one or more traps. In general, multiple traps will increase your chances of success. Of course, one advantage of trapping is that you know when you've been successful!

Until a few years ago, most mole baits had provided inconsistent results. However, a product introduced in recent years has shown effectiveness. It mimics a favorite food of moles: earthworms. When the poison gel-type "worm" is placed inside a mole run, the mole consumes the poison worm and later dies. The product contains the active ingredient bromethalin. Be sure to read and follow all label directions, and heed precautions. Several brand names now offer this product.

For the not-so-do-it-yourselfer, you can always hire someone to do the dirty work. A list of Nuisance Wildlife Control Operators that serve various Indiana counties is available at: http://www.in.gov/dnr/fishwild/2351.htm. Of course, a fee is involved for their products and services.

To understand moles, first realize that moles are not rodents, like voles, mice or rats. They belong to the group of mammals known as insectivores, and thus are related to the shrew. They eat earthworms, white grubs, ants, and other soil insects. And, they hunt their food in shallow burrows through lawns and other areas.

Moles are most active in yards in spring and fall, and after rain showers. They use deeper burrows in dry summer conditions and in winter. Mating occurs during February and March, with a single litter of three to five young born later in the spring following a six-week gestation period. Young moles grow rapidly and leave the nest to fend for themselves at about one month of age.

Nests are 4-16 inches below ground, usually in a protected area, like under a stump or a rock. Surface runways and deeper runways occur 3-12 inches below surface. The soil excavated from the deep tunnels is deposited on the surface through short vertical tunnels in volcano-like mounds.

A common misconception about mole control suggests that if you control grubs, you'll take care of the moles. Grubs make up only a portion of the mole's diet, which also includes earthworms and other soil animals. Moles may not move far from a treated lawn and may periodically re-invade the area in search of food or a mate.

For more information, ask your local Purdue Extension office for publication ADM-10-W, *Moles*, also available free online at Purdue Extension's Education Store, https://mdc.itap.purdue.edu/. Indiana Department of Natural Resources also has information available at: http://in.gov/dnr/fishwild/5740.htm.

Mole image from Purdue Extension publication HN-49-W, by Timothy J. Gibb