

Mole Control

Around the home, damage from moles (*Scalopus aquaticus*) consists mainly of tunnels in yards, gardens, and flower beds. These tunnels form ridges in the soil as the mole searches for food. Many people are surprised to learn that moles are not rodents—they are actually insect eaters related to shrews. This publication is designed to provide information on the characteristics of moles, as well as ways to control them.

Description

Southern moles are 6 to 7 inches long and weigh 3 to 4 ounces. They are well adapted for their tunneling lifestyle, with pointed noses that protrude about ½ inch beyond the mouth, small eyes and ear openings, and large front feet. The feet are webbed and have sharp claws to aid in digging.

Habits

Moles have enormous appetites and may eat up to 100 percent of their body weight in a single day. An analysis of the stomach contents of 100 moles in the Midwest showed that white grubs, earthworms, beetles, and assorted larvae are their principal foods. As you can see, moles feed primarily on insects that feed below the ground.

Moles are usually solitary, although females and young may share the same burrow. The tunnels that the mole makes while searching for food may be used only once or may be traveled repeatedly. Moles may be active during any time of the day and seem to prefer cool, moist soil (the same as that preferred by grubs and earthworms).

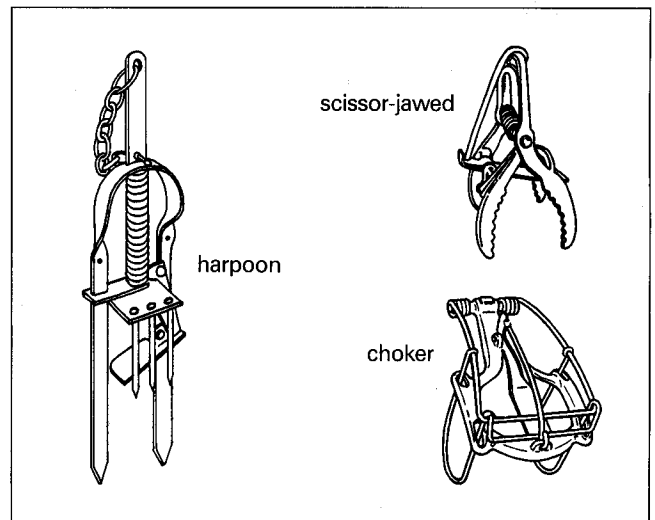
Contrary to popular belief, moles do not eat the roots and bulbs of flowers and vegetables. In fact, they may benefit these plants by feeding on grubs and worms that can damage them. However, the tunneling activities of moles may disfigure lawns and gardens. Since mole damage is usually isolated and of little economic consequence, localized control techniques are more practical than a wholesale eradication program.



Control

Repellents and toxicants are generally ineffective for controlling mole damage. One difficulty associated with toxicants is in getting the moles to accept the bait. Lethal or biological control efforts are the most effective.

Lethal traps are usually of three types: harpoon, scissor-jawed, and choker. Any of these will work well if set properly. To use a trap, first flatten the tunnels



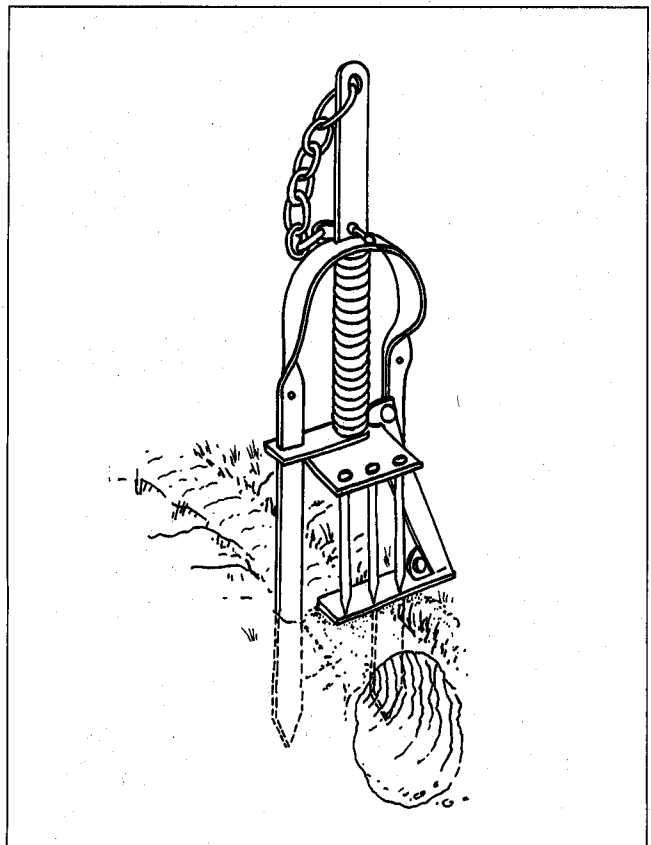
Mole traps.

by stepping on or by using a lawn roller. This will allow you to tell which tunnels are being used, because new ones will appear the next day. Put the traps on these new tunnels. If you are using the harpoon trap, allow it to spring into the ground several times before making the final set. This process will ensure that the harpoons can travel easily through to the tunnel. Do not walk on or disturb other portions of the tunnels.

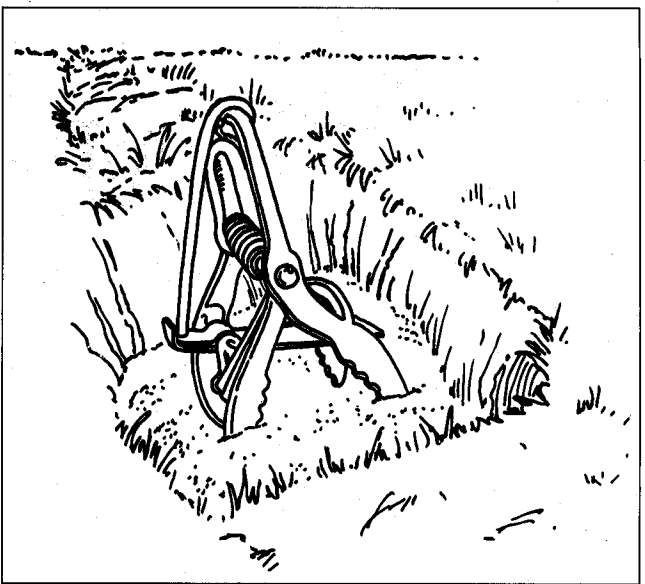
Biological, nonlethal mole control may be achieved by eliminating the food source. This can be accomplished by using insecticides for controlling grubs. White grubs may be controlled naturally by introducing milky-spore disease into the soil. While these techniques may be effective, they are not quick. It may take some time before the food supply is reduced enough to affect the mole population.

Review

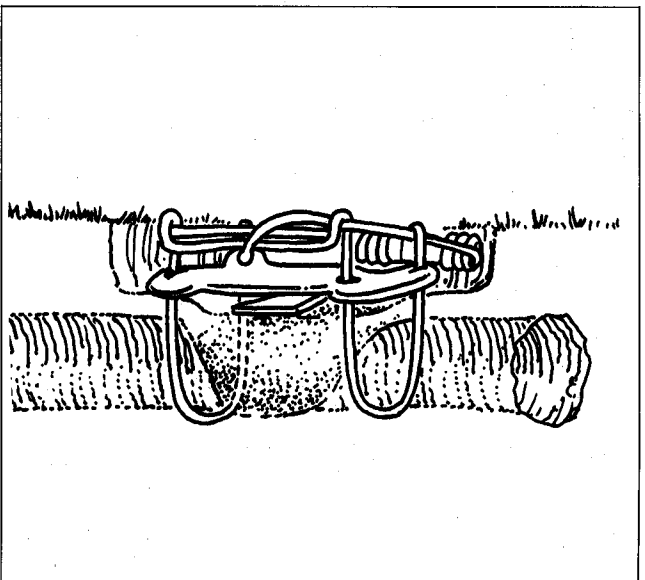
Even though moles may be beneficial in controlling lawn insects, many people find them destructive to landscaping and want them removed. Trapping and biological control are the two most promising methods of managing mole damage. Contact your county Extension agent for information on locating traps or biological controls.



The harpoon trap is set directly over the runway so that its supporting stakes straddle the runway and its spikes will go into the runway when tripped.



The scissor-jawed trap is set so that the jaws straddle the runway.



The choker loop trap is set so that the loop encircles the runway.



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For more information, call your county Extension office. Look in your telephone directory under your county's name to find the number.

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