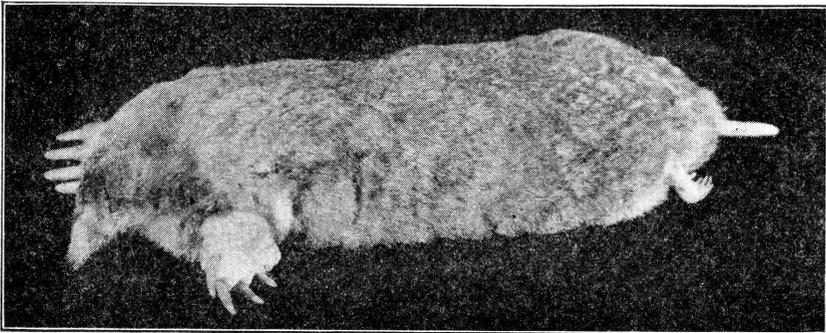


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Control of Moles

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Most gardens and lawns suffer some damage by moles tunneling under crops, injuring sod and causing unsightly washes. The common moles found in Missouri feed largely on earthworms, grubs, cutworms, beetles, and other harmful underground pests, and only rarely do they eat corn or other planted seeds or bits of roots. The familiar injury to bulbs, potatoes, and sweet potatoes is not the work of moles. Certain field mice, which may also inhabit mole tunnels, or gophers cause that damage. By feeding on harmful underground lawn and crop pests and by stirring the soil moles would be decidedly beneficial, if they did not at the same time damage crops and lawns by their burrowing activities. Where erosion is not serious, moles may be beneficial in meadows, pastures, and waste areas.

How Moles Live and Breed

Moles spend most of their life underground. When the soil is moist and earthworms and other food are abundant near the surface they use their powerful, short, hand-shaped front legs to push aside and elevate the soil and sod, forming the characteristic winding mole runs or ridges. In midsummer, when the ground is dry

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and hard, and also in the winter when food is scarce near the surface, they burrow deeper and push out piles of loose dirt, which is frequently mistaken for the work of gophers.

Moles are considered more active than most animals and they consume large quantities of food each day. While they may leave their harbors or nests to feed at any hour of the day, it is a commonly observed fact that they work more during the early morning hours, during the mid-day, and again late in the afternoon. If one wishes to catch them by hand these are the most likely periods of the day to find them working.

As a rule, moles select a protected place in which to den and breed. A fence row, foundation walls, a pile of debris, an old stump, the base of a tree, or a ledge of rock may provide favorable harboring places. When not foraging for food they remain in their dens. They rear their young early in the spring and, as a rule, there are not more than three or four to the litter. Grass and similar materials are used to make a small nest. The young grow rapidly and by early summer they are almost full-grown.

Control Methods

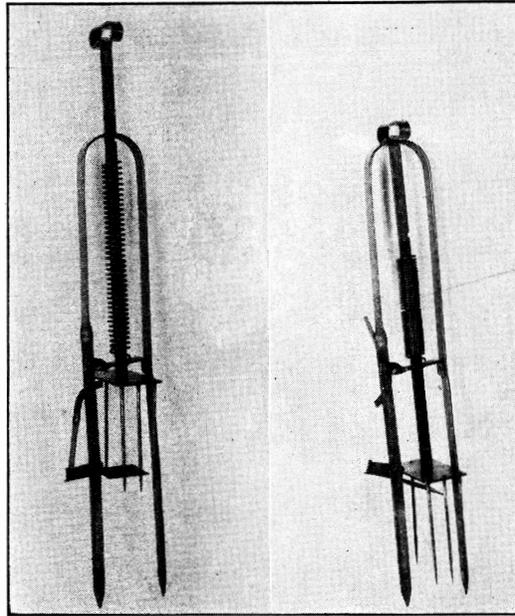
It is not easy to completely protect a lawn or garden from moles, but by using traps, hand destruction, a mole-killing dog, and strong-smelling repellents one can prevent much of their damage.

Traps.—There are a number of different kinds of traps, but, all considered, a vertical spring trap is most satisfactory. This type of trap is placed astride the tunnel and when the trigger is tripped by the mole sharp prongs are thrust down into its back. The results that are secured with traps depend largely upon the correct setting of the traps over the right tunnels. If one simply goes out in the yard or garden and hurriedly sets a trap over any fresh tunnel he will seldom catch a mole.

To use traps successfully, first determine which are the main tunnels leading from the mole's harbor to its feeding grounds. To do this, tramp down all tunnels and see which ones are always first reopened. These will be the main tunnels along which the mole may pass a number of times each day. When the main runs are located, set the traps over them. Where the trap is to be set, close the run by stepping on it and then place the trap astride it, pushing it firmly into the ground so that the flat trigger rests snugly on the surface of the run. Trip the trap a few times to make sure that the spring will force the prongs into the ground to their full depth.

Then set the trap, being sure to leave it off "safety" so that later when the mole passes under the trigger it will trip the trap.

Hand Destruction.—To kill moles by hand, watch for them when they are making new runs in search of food and either dig them out quickly with a spade, fork, or hoe, or close the run behind them with the heel and dig them out by hand. If one will watch for them when they are most active, hand destruction will help.



Mole trap to left with trigger set and off "safety" (notch on central spring bar released from curved top bar). Trap to right is sprung as when prongs are thrust into back of mole in tunnel.

Destruction by Dogs.—Usually a trained rat dog will keep the yard and garden free of moles. An ordinary dog can also be taught to catch them. Unfortunately, dogs, in digging for moles, may do more damage to the lawn and garden than the moles.

Use of Repellents.—Moles have a very keen sense of smell and can be driven to other feeding grounds by dropping mothballs, chunks of carbide, crystals of paradichlorobenzene, or similar chemicals through small holes made in the surface of their runs. Flower beds, vegetable gardens, golf greens, and similar areas can be protected from moles in this way. The fumes of these chem-

icals have no harmful effects on moles but merely serve to drive them away. In fact, the use of the poison calcium cyanide, in mole runs seldom kills them, but it likewise may serve as a repellent.

In conclusion, it may be said that, since moles feed almost entirely on living grubs, worms, and similar creatures, poisoned grain or poisoned meat baits are not effective, and systematic trapping, combined with the use of hand destruction, a mole-killing dog, and repellents to drive them to other feeding grounds, is the most effective known method of protecting a lawn, garden, or other tracts of ground from the injurious work of moles.

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