

CRITTER CONTROL FACT SHEET

Eastern Mole (*Scalopus aquaticus*)

GENERAL DESCRIPTION

Moles are mammals of the order Insectivora (not to be confused with rodents). Their primary foods are earthworms, insect larva, and other arthropods found in the soil. The adults measure from five to eight inches in length and have dark gray or brown fur. Their feet, nose and tail are pink. The nose is fleshy and serves as a touch organ. Their eyes are small sometimes concealed by fur, and are light sensitive. The front feet are broad and equipped with well-developed claws for digging.

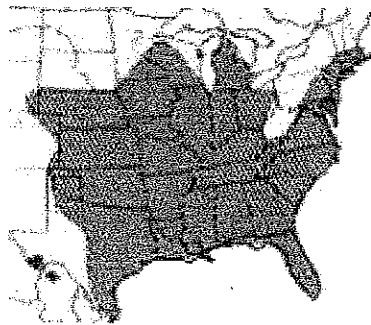
COMMON SPECIES

The eastern mole is the most common culprit in lawn damage. Star nose (*Condylura cristata*) moles are found in swampy areas and their tunnels are deeper than the eastern mole.

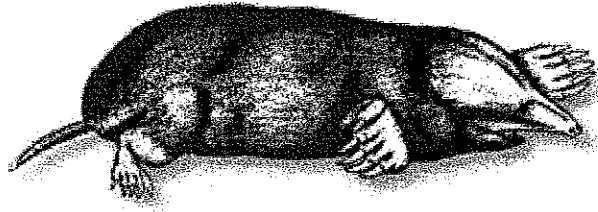
TUNNELING

Moles build an extensive network of tunnels varying in depth. Tunnels close to the surface may be visible, while deep tunnels remain concealed. Shallow tunnels where the ground is raised are usually feeding tunnels. Deep tunnels are used as living quarters where they retreat from cold, drought, heat and other adverse conditions. They also use deep tunnels for rearing their young.

A mole hill is built of dirt pushed up from these deep tunnels. Deep tunnels may be from six to twenty-four inches below the surface. Moles are very active diggers and tunnel at an average rate of twelve to fifteen feet per hour. In soft soil shallow tunnels can be generated at a rate of a foot per minute. Moles can be active at any time of day or night, and damage occurs year-round. The mole seldom appears above ground; if it does, it is usually at night.



Range of the Eastern Mole



TUNNEL INVADERS

Moles usually do not share their tunnels with other moles, although tunnels may be invaded by other animals (most notably shrews, voles, mice, rats or pocket gophers). When this happens moles sometimes get blamed for injury to plant roots, tubers or seeds (rodent damage is indicated by teeth marks).

BIOLOGY

Moles produce one litter per year in the spring, averaging three to four young. The young will stay with the female in her tunnels for about a month and then will begin tunneling on their own. The young develop very quickly and reach adult size in four to eight weeks. Populations fluctuate slowly, increasing when the habitat becomes favorable, and decreasing when food is scarce.

HABITS/FEEDING

Moles feed almost entirely on insects, grubs and earthworms as they tunnel through the soil, however, some plant material (roots and bulbs) may be consumed. It is generally felt that damage to plants is due to tunneling activity rather than preferences for certain roots or types of plants. Their appetite seems almost insatiable as they eat more than their body weight each day. This food requirement is necessary due to their extremely active lifestyles.

TRAPPING

Although trapping is the most effective method of control for moles, it requires time, patience, and the knowledge of the mole's habits to be successful.

CHEMICALS

Although several chemicals are registered for control of grubs, most have little effect on earthworms which are the mole's main source of food. This method may actually result in the increased foraging of moles looking for food.

CONCLUSION

Control of moles can be a difficult situation for even the experienced technician-but knowledge of the behavior, biology, and the number of control techniques available will make this formidable task much easier.

*Critter Control offers a variety of integrated pest management strategies for moles.
Contact your local Critter Control office for further details.*