

LOUISIANA CRITTER CORNER

November 2012



EASTERN MOLE

Some animals only occasionally earn the dubious distinction of “nuisance wildlife” when their habits interfere with human activities. The Eastern mole fits this category almost any time it invades landscapes because of its burrowing activities while engaged in feeding and traveling.

Although these moles remove many damaging insects and grubs from lawns and gardens, their burrowing habits disfigure lawns and parks, destroy flower beds, tear up the roots of grasses, and create havoc in small garden plots.



Moles are insectivores, closely related to shrews and bats. Their hairless pointed snout, small eyes and concealed ear canal openings, as well as large forefeet and webbed toes, all are physical adaptations to the underground world of these fossorial animals. A mole's powerful forelimbs allows it to move 32 times its body weight and to move through most soils at incredible speeds of 15 to 18 feet per hour in unexcavated ground and up to 80 feet per minute through existing runs.

Moles spend the majority of their time in search of insects, grubs and earthworms, eating approximately 70 to 100 percent of their weight each day. The roots,

tubers and bulbs damaged in lawns and gardens are not eaten but are simply a casualty in this carnivorous predators search for food.

Moles live a very secluded life in underground burrows, coming to the surface only rarely, and then often only by accident. They are thought to be loners and when several are trapped in close proximity to each other it is believed that different tunnel networks sometime come together and join otherwise separate burrows.

Moles prefer loose, moist soil and they are most often found in soils shaded by vegetation. They are not able to function in compact dried soils. While more or less active year-round, moles are busiest during rainy summer periods finding and storing foods.

Their gestation period is 42 days with three to five young being born mainly in March and April. A mole's secluded underground life lends it to few predators and spring floods are considered to be the greatest threat to adult moles and their young.

Control Measures

Traps and poisons are considered to be the most effective methods for controlling moles. Choker type or harpoon type traps can be set in active runways to kill moles as they travel in search of food.

Several toxicants are also labeled for mole control, with application again targeted for active runways. A common poison marketed for mole control called Poison Peanuts[®] utilizes Zinc Phosphide as the active ingredient. This poison uses a grain-based carrier system, so ingestion by the moles is thought to be more of an incidental occurrence, given the insectivorous lifestyle of the animals.

Recent research also has shown that the anticoagulant poison bromethalin works as an energy metabolism antagonist, providing an effective way to exploit the high-energy demands of the mole's active life-

style. Further research showed that when formulated to look and feel like an earthworm, moles readily accepted the bait. This product is marketed under the trade name Talpirid[®]. Another advantage of Talpirid is that the plastic-like formulation allows it to hold together and remain effective in moist soil conditions, unlike the older grain-based poisons.

When using either traps or poisons, care must be taken to insure that an active tunnel is targeted rather than one that has been abandoned. Active tunnels can be located by crushing in the earth on several tunnels and returning the next day to determine where the soil is raised back up. That would indicate active tunnels.

Like most nuisance wildlife removal endeavors, patience and persistence must be practiced in order to be successful in removing these burrowing critters from your landscape.

LOUISIANA CRITTER CORNER

Dr. Don Reed
Professor (Wildlife)
Bob R. Jones-Idlewild
Research Station
(225) 683-5848

Reviewers:
Dr. Regina Bracy
Hammond Research Station

Dr. Allen Owings
Hammond Research Station

Visit our website:
www.LSUAgCenter.com



Louisiana State University Agricultural Center
William B. Richardson, Chancellor

Louisiana Agricultural Experiment Station
John S. Russin, Vice Chancellor and Director

Louisiana Cooperative Extension Service
Paul D. Coreil, Vice Chancellor and Director

The LSU AgCenter is a statewide campus of the LSU System and provides equal opportunities in programs and employment.