

Controlling moles in the landscape is often difficult, frustrating

BY Kenny E. Perry, Extension Agent for Agriculture and Natural Resources

Although they are rarely seen, moles certainly do leave a lot of visual evidence of their presence in a landscape. Their tunnels and mounds of soil, called molehills, are very unsightly in a lawn and can be aggravating to mow over and around. They're not rodents, even though they look and behave somewhat like one, but they're actually a mammal. But most homeowners don't really care what they are; they just want to get rid of them!

Moles can be found in lawns, cemeteries, golf courses, pastures, meadows, woodlands, sandy soils near streams, and light, loamy soils in our area. Since they are adapted for life underground, they construct extensive underground tunnels, using two types: shallow surface tunnels in the spring, summer, and fall and deep permanent tunnels used year-round as the main avenues of travel. Nest cavities and home areas, 6 inches in diameter and lined with vegetation, can be found 12 to 18 inches beneath the soil surface connecting the deep tunnels.

Moles are active any time of the day but are most active from 4 to 7 a.m. and 6 to 9 p.m. all year. Moles must be very active to meet high energy requirements. In fact, they can burrow as fast as 1 foot per minute. High energy mole food comes as grubs, earthworms, beetles and beetle larvae, insects and insect larvae, snails, and spiders. Although often blamed for damage to plants and bulbs, they rarely eat plant parts.

When it comes to controlling moles, there are several techniques that can be used. Traps, repellents, baits and physical removal can all be effective. Two different traps are sold for moles: harpoon and scissor jaw. Both can be effective if set properly. Most hardware stores carry these devices that usually cost from \$15-25. Physical removal of moles can be accomplished by crushing the tunnels and waiting for the mole to begin working to push up the tunnels again. A shovel or hoe works well to pop the mole out of the ground so you can kill it.

The fastest growing segment of mole control is repellents and baits. Most of the homeowners that have called into the office about moles don't really want to repel this critter; they want him gone for good, so we'll focus on the baits. A couple of examples are Tom Cat Mole Killer or Talpid Mole Killer, both of which contain bromethalin. This rodenticide is incorporated into a fake, molded earth worm that looks like a rubber fishing worm. Although relatively new, this product seems to be effective.

Here are a few things that may work, but generally are not long term solutions. Insecticides may kill some grub species, but they usually won't kill earthworms which is the major food for moles. Mole beans, human hair, razor blades and dozens of other traditional remedies may be effective for short time, but not long-term. Wind mills and other vibration

devices seldom work for more than a few days. Poison peanuts do not work because moles are insectivores and will not eat vegetable matter.

For more information on mole control, call the Graves County Extension Office at 247-2334.

(Source: UK Turf Science and For-42, Managing Mole Problems in KY)

Educational programs of the Kentucky Cooperative Extension Service serve all people regardless of race, color, age, sex, religion, disability, or national origin.