

Lawn Care

A discussion of the vital problems of lawn making and maintenance

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MOLES, Potent Destroyers of Good Turf

WITHIN the boundaries of the United States there are five groups of true moles. Inasmuch as they are quite alike as far as activities are concerned we shall not classify them.

WHAT MOLES FEED UPON.

All species live chiefly upon earthworms and other insects that inhabit the ground. To the extent that they destroy harmful insects they are beneficial to the farmer but in lawns they, of course, do considerable damage by heaving up the soil, which causes the grass to dry out quickly. It is in moist rich soils that moles usually operate. When a mole is living in a lawn it cannot conceal the evidence of its presence. Ridges or conspicuous mounds plainly indicate the runways. The ridges

show the direction and course of the animal's hunting paths, which are so close to the surface that the sod or soil crust is raised. The mounds indicate deeper tunneling for they are formed of earth pushed up from lower workings where the soil is too compact to be simply

crowded aside. In Farmers' Bulletin No. 1247, distributed by the U. S. Department of Agriculture, we find the opinion expressed that moles work only at regular intervals each day, morning, noon, and evening. But they are no more active at one time of day than another. If an

opening is made into a mole's runway the little animal will invariably repair the breach when it next comes that way.

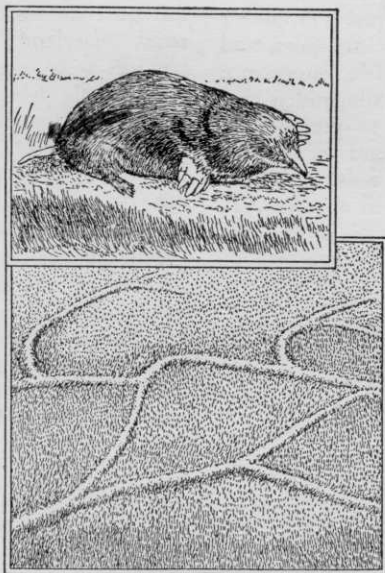
MOLES MATURE RAPIDLY

Moles grow and develop with astonishing rapidity. For example, in the Puget Sound country most of the young are born in the latter half of March and spend the month of April in the nest. By the last of May they are so well grown that the ordinary observer would not be able to distinguish them from the parent. This rapid

growth accounts for the fact that the small young mole is seldom if ever trapped. The mole's appetite seems insatiable. In captivity it will sometimes eat more than its own weight in a day.

CONTROL METHODS.

But our problem here is to explain the



The Mole and his handiwork

various methods by which moles may be destroyed and not to dwell at too much length upon their personal habits. The three accepted methods of combating moles are trapping, poisoning, and asphyxiating.

KINDS OF TRAPS.

Many types of mole traps are manufactured in this country, all of them being made of metal and depending for their operation on some sort of tripping device. The trigger pin is designed to rest upon an obstruction, such as a board, placed in the mole's runway when the trap is set. The trap is sprung when the mole follows its natural instinct to reopen the runway by burrowing through or upheaving the obstruction. The American traps are of three types: (1) choker loops, (2) clipping or scissor jaws, and (3) impaling spikes. No importance need be attached to the admonition that one should use gloves to prevent the animal's getting the scent of human hands. Experience has shown that this doesn't affect the catch in any way. A good strong garden trowel is the best tool to use in setting mole traps.

POISONING MOLES.

So many satisfactory experiences have been reported in the killing of moles by poisons in lawns and golf courses that we feel more inclined to recommend it rather than trapping. Various poisons and methods by which they are introduced are as follows:

CALCIUM CYANIDE. Open the burrow every five feet and place in it a teaspoonful of this poison and close the opening without stamping it down.

CARBON BISULPHIDE. Pour a teaspoonful into the burrows at points about five feet apart. Close the holes as recommended for Calcium Cyanide to retain the poisonous fumes.

STRYCHNINE. (Credit is due Mr. Inglis of Savannah, Georgia, for this idea.)

Take raw peanuts, squeeze the end of each shell, insert a crystal of Strychnine and then put a peanut in each runway. This method Mr. Inglis finds much more effective than trapping.

PARADICHLORBENZINE. This vicious sounding chemical is recommended by the Department of Agriculture for destroying the peach tree borer. It is commercially obtainable in the form of a powder which, when placed in the ground, gives off a heavy poisonous gas which penetrates the soil. It should be dropped into the runways every six to ten feet and the soil put back. About a teaspoonful should be used. The moles end their activities immediately.

POTASSIUM CYANIDE. (Here is a poison used successfully at Edgewood Arsenal, Maryland.) Small cubes of raw potatoes were immersed in a 20% solution of this poison and inserted in the burrow at 10 or 12 foot intervals. There is no danger of injury to children or livestock in using the poison in this manner.

ARSENIC ALSO USABLE.

Still another remedy has recently been reported by one of our thoughtful customers, Mr. W. T. Whittington, Marion, Illinois. "I successfully rid my lawn of moles by digging down in their runways at various places and putting in a handful of shelled corn that I had previously soaked in a water solution of arsenic. There is no danger to dogs or chickens because the poison is covered."

ASPHYXIATING.

Attach a garden hose to the end of the exhaust pipe of an automobile. The connection may be made secure by using electricians' tape or by wrapping with an old inner tube. Insert the other end of the hose in the runway and allow the motor to run for twenty minutes. Carbon monoxide will kill the moles if the runway is tightly sealed. Any openings should be closed with mud.