

Sarah Denkler
Horticulture Specialist
March 13, 2011

Moles

If I only had a nickel for all the questions I am getting about moles so far this year. What I am being asked over and over is, “How can I control moles in my yard?”

The biggest nuisance caused by a mole is the raised area or ridge that develops in lawns, beds and gardens as the small mammal moves around looking for food. Movement can sometimes take a mole past the root system of a plant and this can damage the plant if the root is exposed to air and dries out. Once a runway is established by a mole it may serve as the main pathway for moving about the yard. While some runs are used continuously others will be used once and then never used again. When maintaining the yard these runways may be large enough to get cut by a mower. This damage can be an aggravation for those who like a lush and dense lawn as it damages the shoot and root of grass and hinders growth.

Moles need a large quantity of food to supply the amount of activity they use in a day. They will eat adult insects, spiders, earthworms and sometimes roots if food is scarce. They burrow in the ground year round to find food. When it is wet and warm you may find that the activity increases.

Their offspring are produced in March, April and May, maturing in only four weeks. The young increase the population in spring and the added moisture in soil coupled with warming temperatures create a mole utopia.

Control of moles may center on repelling them, removing their food source or killing them. If you have a large amount of activity in your yard then one or more control efforts may prove valuable. Repellents can be used in a particular area such as a bulb bed. Moles will eat bulbs but mostly they dislodge bulbs, causing them to dry out from exposure to the elements. By repelling them from this area the bulbs will be saved but there will still be a problem somewhere in the yard.

You can remove the food source. They feed on insects, especially grubs. Putting down a form of grub control each year will result in fewer grubs to feed on. The down side is that you will have increased activity, especially during the first year, as the moles keep looking for the food source that was recently present. This activity should waiver over time as they realize the food source is gone.

There are traps that can be placed in the run to kill the moles as they move through active tunnels. You must find an active tunnel in order to find an appropriate location to place the trap and of course moles can be very good at avoiding traps. There are several types of traps that can be used. Harpoon-like traps do the least damage to the mole run and may prove to be the most reliable trap. Of course if all else fails, get an eager dog.

Source: Pierce, Robert E. Controlling Nuisance Moles. Extension Publication G9440. University of Missouri.

University of Missouri Extension programs are open to all.