

Mole Control

Now that mowing season has begun, you'll likely start to notice 'meandering paths of upheaved soil' that makes the mower ride a little rougher! Moles! While they tend to spend most of their time below ground, the above ground damage is all too visible – and annoying!

Soil upheavals are a result of the moles looking for food. Moles primarily feed on earthworms (and a little on grubs as well!). As they burrow through the soil to look for them, they tend to cause disturbance damage to roots and even the uprooting of small plants. In other words, the moles aren't feeding on your flower bulbs – but they may be doing damage to the bed by their foraging just the same!

No shortage of 'mole control' products have been tried over time. Home remedies like chewing gum, noisemakers, broken glass, bleach, windmills, and human hair have all been suggested and tried as possible control methods. Unfortunately, none have proven to provide consistent and reliable control. Even poison baits tend to fail because moles feed on earthworms and grubs, not the vegetable matter that is typically the base of most baits. Grub control products might help w/ the grub population, but they aren't effective against earthworms, leaving the primary food source untouched.

The best control method is actually the use of traps: harpoon, choker, and scissor-jawed types to be specific. Each can be effective but may take some time to master!

Not all of the upheaved soil paths that moles create are active. Some tunnels may be abandoned soon after being built while others are travel lanes used for a longer period of time. To determine which ones are actually in use, use a broomstick or other object to poke holes in a number of runs. Come back a day later to check them and see which of the runs have been "repaired." If repaired, these are the active runs and should be used for trap placement.

Place traps in active runs by digging out a little soil, placing the trap and then replacing loose soil. Secure the trap well so that the recoil will not lift the trap out of the ground. Make sure the triggering mechanism is in the center of the run.

Finish by pushing down two more holes, one on each side of the trap. The hope is that moles will be caught when they try to repair the tunnel. If you haven't caught a mole in three days, move the trap and start again!

For more information on mole control as well as "How-to" videos, see the K-State Research and Extension wildlife control page on moles located online at <http://www.wildlife.k-state.edu/species/moles/index.html>. Publications are also available from your District Office.