

Rec'd. - 5000 - 6-18-71

FACT SHEET

L-996

TRAPPING MOLES IN TEXAS

Virgil V. Parsons*

Trapping is a satisfactory method of mole control when the habits and instincts of the mole are understood. A mole becomes suspicious when its sensitive nose encounters anything foreign in its runway, causing it to back up and burrow around or under an ordinary trap set in its tunnel. It is not suspicious of dirt blocking the runway, however, since its burrow frequently is closed by farm machinery, man and large animals. The mole pushes its way into a dirt blockade, reopens it and continues on its way. This habit provides opportunity for using a special trap that encircles or is held suspended above the runway and with the trigger pan resting on a dirt blockade. The unsuspecting mole cannot detect the trap, and in pushing into the dirt obstruction it lifts the trigger pan, releasing the trap spring.

The mole is very sensitive to an unnatural environment. Thus, the trapper should never tear up large or numerous sections of the mole burrow in trying to locate a favorable setting for a trap.

The selection of a frequently used runway for a trap set is important. East of the Rocky Mountains, most traps have to be placed in hunting tunnels that are conspicuous ridges close to the surface. These surface runways are made for the purpose of finding food. Many tunnels are used only once while others are used regularly. Usually a runway on a straight course for some distance or one that connects two systems of workings is in constant use. A tunnel that has mouse holes or breaks opening into it is not used because moles usually repair surface openings. In large fields with heavy infestation, runways in use may be found by driving a vehicle back and forth across the area, flattening the mole ridges at intervals of 50 to 100 feet. The next day, the regularly used runways will be raised again.

Once the trapper locates the deeper runs, often highways used by many moles, he may catch several moles by continued use of traps in one place.

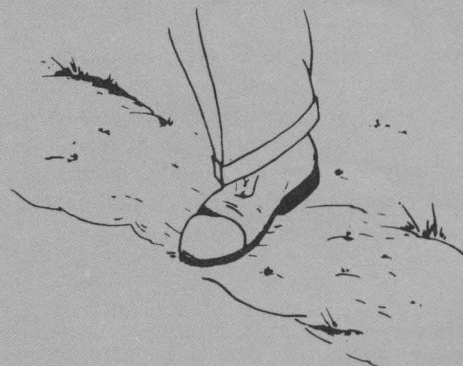
Deeper tunnels usually are 3 to 12 inches or more below the surface, along fence lines or ridges in open fields or at crossings from sodded to cultivated ground. An entire field can be treated successfully by setting traps along the fence rows in early spring at first signs of activity. Moles may be trapped at any season, but it is not practical to operate when the ground is frozen or exceedingly dry.

Harpoon and choker loop traps are used most commonly for trapping. These are available from hardware stores in areas where these insect and worm eaters are commonly found.

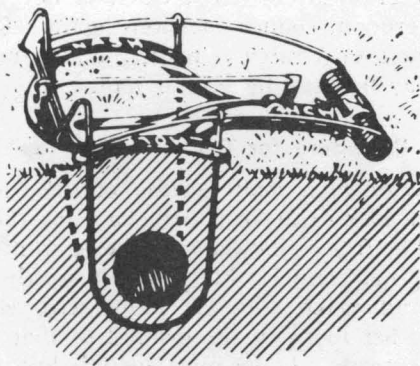
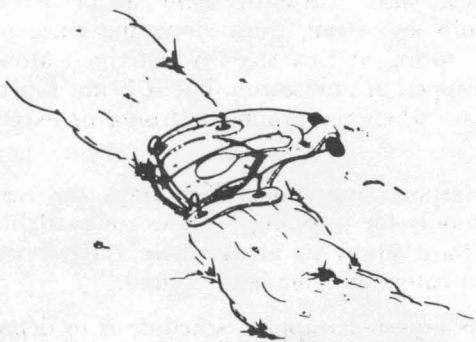
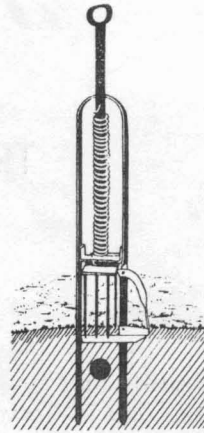
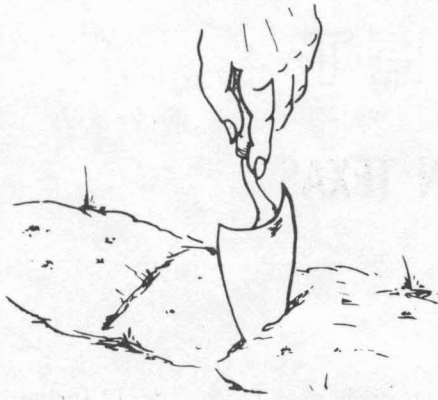
A suggested trapping schedule is to depress the runs before dark and to inspect them at 7 a.m. Then set a trap where a tunnel is raised. If a catch is not made by mid-morning, move the trap to another location. If a catch is not made by late afternoon, change locations again. Reset the trap wherever a catch is made, because main runways may be used by several moles.

Setting Procedure for Choker Loop Trap

Press down a small section of the runway by hand or foot to make a firm base for the trigger pan. The trigger should rest at least an inch above the original tunnel. Measure the width between loops and make slits for loops with shovel or trowel. Set loops in the ground so that the trap frame is steady. Loops must encircle but not intersect the tunnels.



*Extension predatory animal and rodent control specialist, Texas A&M University.



Setting Procedure for Harpoon Trap

Proceed as with the choker loop trap. Press supports firmly into the ground to depth allowed by trigger. Set and spring the trap a few times to allow prongs to enter easily. Spread loose soil lightly over prong holes. Hold trap straight and press solidly into the ground. If soil is too loose to hold, weld extensions to the trap.

Facts About Moles

- Moles eat earthworms and insects that live in the soil. They must feed almost constantly to maintain themselves. Some may eat their body weight in one day.
- Moles can damage roots while hunting for food. Plant rows are preferred because this is where greatest fertility occurs. Some feed on tubers.
- Moles have an optic nerve but practically no eye. It is believed that they have an organ of sense rather than sight.
- When working deep in the soil, moles move earth up through the ground surface. This volcano-like pile should not be confused with a pocket gopher mound.
- Female moles give birth to a litter of four each year in April. Young moles look fully grown at a month of age.
- Many small rodents use mole runs. The plant damage they cause may be blamed on moles.
- Snakes, shrews and weasels may prey upon moles. Dogs and cats do not consider them too tasty. Hawks and owls will feed upon moles which venture out of their burrows.