
**NATURAL RESOURCES—WILDLIFE**  
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# Moles

Several species of moles inhabit the United States, but only the common or Eastern mole and the Star-nosed mole are found in Minnesota. Moles are characterized by having beak-like noses, tiny rudimentary eyes, no visible ears, paddle-like front feet with large claws, velvety fur and stubby, hairless tails.

Moles are not rodents. They are classed as insectivores, and a close examination of their teeth reveals lack of enlarged incisors characteristic of rodents. Typical mole diet would include earthworms, beetles, grubs, and other insect larvae. Moles seldom feed on plant material; however, several species of mice may inhabit mole burrows and damage bulbs and other plant roots.

Since moles are nearly blind and their front legs are adapted for digging, they are severely disadvantaged outside their burrows. Consequently, they seldom venture from their system of tunnels.

Eastern moles commonly inhabit fields, meadows, and lawns throughout counties in the southeastern fourth of Minnesota. Their shallow tunneling raises irregular, snake-like pressure ridges on the surface. Unfortunately, this activity may kill plants and cause homeowners some concern.

Star-nosed moles are found in wet areas of the northern forests. Their activity more closely resembles pocket gopher diggings since the pressure ridges are absent, but there are noticeable mounds of loose soil present. Twenty-two small pink tentacles tip the nose of this mole and are used to detect the presence of worms and insect larvae.

## CONTROL

Trapping is probably the most cost-effective method of control which can be used by the homeowner. Time, patience, and knowledge of mole habits are required if trapping is to be successful. The three most commonly used trap types are 1) harpoon, 2) choker, and 3) scissor-jaw. These can be purchased from nurseries, hardware or farm supply stores.

The best time to trap is in the early spring, when pressure ridges are first noticed, or after the first fall rains. Other times of the year moles may retreat deep underground and are difficult to capture.

All runways are not in constant use. To find the active ones, roll or stamp down a short section of each ridge. Observe daily for several days and restamp any

mole



raised sections. If the ridge is raised daily, it is an active runway, and a trap should be set there. Be certain to move any trap which fails to catch a mole within 2 days.

### Choker and Scissor-jaw Traps

Press down a small section of the runway lightly (figure 1) with the hand or foot to make a base for the trigger pan. Make slits in the ground (figure 2) for the loops. Set choker loops in the slits (figure 3) so that the loops encircle the runway. Be sure that the bottoms of the loops (figure 4) are at least an inch below the original passage. The scissor-jaw trap is used just like the choker trap.

Figure 1



Figure 2

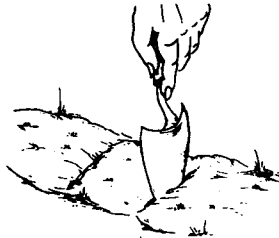
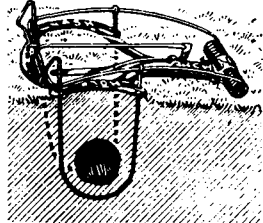


Figure 3



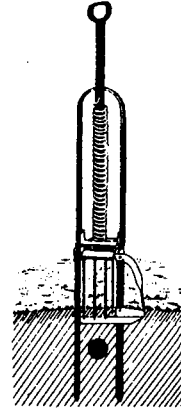
Figure 4



### Harpoon Trap

After finding the active runway, level the ridge as in figure 1. Set the trap with the two pointed supports astride the runway and insert into the ground deeply enough to prevent recoil when the trap is sprung and the trigger is flush with the ground (figure 5). The prongs should be poised about an inch above the original runway. Raise and release the prongs several times before adjusting the trigger so that earth will not prevent full trap action.

Figure 5



Inspect traps after a rain. If the soil has washed away, leaving a space beneath a trap trigger, insert a chip of flat stone in this space to insure quick trigger action or reset the trap.

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