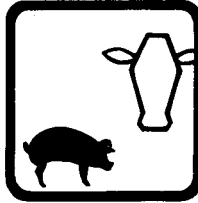
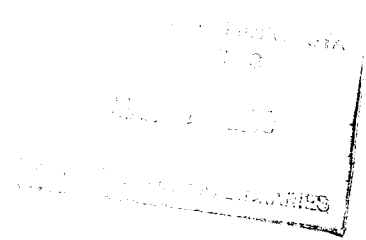


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NATURAL RESOURCES—WILDLIFE
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JAMES R. KITTS



Shrews

This group of insectivores contains Minnesota's smallest mammal—the tiny pygmy shrew, 2 inches long, and weighing only 1/7 to 1/9 ounce, about the weight of a dime. Shrews are frequently confused with mice but are distinctly different. Shrews have noticeably pointed noses, no external ears, tiny black eyes, and dense velvety fur. While most species of mice have only four toes on the front feet, shrews have five toes on all four feet. When disturbed, they emit a strong, vile odor.

Coupled with their high heat loss in a small body, shrews are very active and may feed at night or during the day to meet an exceptionally high metabolic rate. Their diet consists of a variety of insects, earthworms, slugs, snails, amphibians, and small rodents. Shrews are very aggressive and have sharp teeth well suited for biting and tearing flesh. The shorttail shrew also has poisonous saliva which aids it in subduing mice and it can inflict a painful bite to humans.

Six species of shrews are found in Minnesota. They range in size from the pygmy shrew, the smallest, to the largest—the shorttail shrew, 4 to 5 inches long, weighing up to 3/4 ounce. The masked shrew shares the range across the northern U.S. and Canada and probably is the most common member of the shrew family.

While most shrews are a rather drab gray or gray-brown, the Arctic shrew is distinctive with a dark brown back, lighter sides and buffy-white underside. It can be found throughout Minnesota except in the southern counties.

The least shrew, distinctive with its small size and short tail, is rather rare in Minnesota, only found in the southeastern counties. The northern water shrew is well named and spends much of its life swimming in search of food. It is found along streams and meadow bogs in the northern three quarters of the state.

CONTROL

Shrews do occur in urban and suburban areas particularly where the residential landscaping or surrounding natural vegetation supports high populations of the shrews' preferred foods. As predators, shrews tend to focus their activity in areas having a concentration of food items, but since they devour enormous numbers of insects, snails, slugs, and mice, they should be protected. Occasionally they enter dwellings—seldom do they cause damage. The presence of shrews in large numbers may be an indication that household pests such as mice or large insects are present. Investigate thoroughly for signs of these pests.

Shrews can be removed by live trapping with smallest size traps (Havahart 0 or Tomahawk 101) or can be caught with mouse traps. In either instance, appropriate baits would be peanut butter, chocolate, small squares of bacon, ham or raw beef.



shorttail shrew

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