

Mole Control

Moles are typically serious in lawns that have good, undisturbed soil and lawns located near woods or pastures. The only serious species we have in Kentucky is the Eastern Mole. This mole dislodges/uproots grass as it makes runs and it smothers grass in a circular area as it extracts soil into surface mounds. Moles are insectivores, eating mainly earthworms but also will eat grubs, spiders, etc. They are active every month of the year and must eat every day. Since moles are very territorial only 3 or 4 may occur per acre although one may suspect dozens of moles in an individual lawn when based upon surface runs and mounds that may accumulate over time.

In search for food, the mole makes runs near the surface and makes runs underground some 6 to 18 inches below the surface. When the surface soil is not frozen the mole will move back and forth between these surface and below ground runs every four hours or so in search of earthworms or insects that have inadvertently entered the void made by the mole. When the food supply has diminished, the mole will leave the lawn area and may not return for several weeks or months. Because you almost never see the mole, you never know for sure if the mole is present or whether the mole has moved on to happier hunting ground.

Where mounds occur in lawns, it is imperative that the fresh surface mound be spread out immediately (hopefully before it rains and settles down) by foot or rake. Never run over the mound with a riding lawn mower wheel – killing/smothering out a large area of grass bigger than a basketball. If you spread the soil out, the remaining hole will not be more than an inch in diameter.

Mole control involves work, and there are no easy solutions. Consider the following:

Insecticides may kill some grub species but they will not kill earthworms – the major food for moles.

Mole beans, human hair, razor blades and dozens of other traditional remedies may be effective for some, but generally do not work. Wind mills and other vibration devices never work for more than a few days.

Poison peanuts do not work because moles are insectivores and will not eat vegetable matter.

Cats will stalk moles and remove them gently from lawns; however mole training of cats has not been productive.

Dogs will actively remove moles, but often tear up more lawn than the mole will.

The **harpoon trap** is the most proven method for mole control. With lots of mole problems, it is best to purchase several traps, set them over active runs, and move the traps every day or so to make sure that you engaging active runs. If you do not see new runs, then the mole has likely left the lawn and may not be back for several weeks or months.

Mole Exit is a castor oil based product that can cause moles to leave a lawn area for a few days or weeks, but the mole often returns with a vengeance.

Talpirid / Tom Cat Mole Killer is a relatively new product that uses fake, organic based, molded earthworms with an injected rodenticide. These fake worms can be placed into active runs or mounds and is the best solution for riding lawns of moles.

Method: When you see a day or two-day old active run or mound, place one fake worm within the void of the run or within the void below the mound. The run (void) is only an inch or two below the grass and is easy to locate. The mounds are usually 6 to 18 inches above the underground run (void) and one must use a dowel or stick to push the fake worm through the one inch diameter hole that the mole has made to connect to the below ground run(void).

When you observe a network of runs or observe runs that could be several days or weeks old, it is best to walk-down the runs and then observe the area daily. If any portion of the run is again raised by the mole, place a worm within. Moles have a habit of working an area and then leaving that area for better hunting ground. It is not practical to place these fake worms in older runs because the organic worms may decay before the mole returns.

These fake worms look similar to earthworms or rubber fishing worms. They will cost \$2 to \$4 each and are sold under various trade names such as Talpirid and Tomcat Mole Killer. Because you are placing these underground and because each worm has only an amount of bromethalin that would kill an individual mole, it is unlikely that you would poison a pet with this product. But as always, follow the safety precautions carefully.

Regardless of which method is used and how many moles you kill, other moles will often return within several weeks or months. The surface runs that are so obvious and annoying are not nearly as extensive as the underground runs. It is easy for neighboring moles to re-infest a lawn via these deeper runs and likewise easy for the mole to escape your vengeance.