

Voles

When the deep snow in our yards recede, one or more pathways in the grass areas may greet you. If you're lucky, these paths only run from one burrow opening to another. Unfortunately, some of the trails probably lead to some of your favorite trees and the damage caused by the animals girdling (gnawing the bark off all the way around the plant) the tree will kill it. The furry culprit in this destruction? The Vole.

The vole damage is sometimes mistaken as mole damage. Other than having similar sounding names and both causing havoc to yards, voles and moles have little in common. Moles are insectivores, and their primary diet is earthworms with a few grubs and insects tossed in as appetizers. Voles, on the other hand, are plant-eaters. They feed on grass and perennial-flowers roots, they'll eat seeds and bulbs, and especially in the winter when other foods are scarce, they'll even girdle the bark off trees and shrubs. Voles are active throughout the day and night and do not hibernate. Voles construct many surface runways and underground tunnels with many burrow entrances. Most damage occurs in the winter when voles move through their grass runways under protection of snow or where there are thick, tall grasses and weeds. Heaviest vole damage seems to coincide with years of heavy snowfall.

What To Do

Methods to prevent and control vole damage are habitat management, exclusion, repellents, trapping and rodenticide baits. Elimination of ground cover including weeds and tall grasses by frequent close mowing or tilling are the most successful and longest method to reduce vole damage. Mulch should be cleared 3 feet or more from the bases of trees. If you would like to use a rodenticide bait you can purchase it at local hardware store, be sure to follow the instructions on the label and it can be placed by hand in runways and burrow openings.

Comments