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Vole

Microtus spp.



GENERAL INFORMATION

Voles are small rodents commonly referred to as Meadow mice. They typically live in extensive underground burrows, favoring soil with heavy grass or ground-covering for nesting. They are active underneath snow-covered soil during cold weather, and leave obvious signs of burrowing after ground thaws. Seventy species of vole exist worldwide

SIGNS OF INFESTATION

Voles are not an indoor pest. They do not hibernate during cold weather, but may occasionally wander into rodent traps while searching for food sources. Large outdoor populations may cause damage to turf, ornamentals, trees, crops, gardens and other fauna. Visible signs of activity in an outdoor setting include distinct runways between underground burrow openings, greenish droppings on runways, and narrow, irregular sections of gnawing damage on tree bark near trunks (see image on upper right).

FOOD SOURCES

Voles favor vegetation as a food source, but will also eat seeds, bark of living trees, field crops, snails, insects, and animal carcasses. They commonly hoard seeds and vegetation in their underground burrows for consumption when food is scarce.



DIAGNOSTIC MORPHOLOGY

Adults:

- Compact body (5-8 inches long) similar in size to adult mouse
- Legs and tail are short
- Ears are small
- Fur is dark - greyish brown
- Specifics vary according to species

Immature Stage:



LIFE CYCLE

Voles can produce 1-5 litters per year, with an average of 3-6 young per litter. They breed year-round, with reproductive activity peaking during warmer weather. A vole's average life span is 2-16 months.

CONTROL & TREATMENT

In an indoor museum setting, vole sightings are incidental and do not require remediation. However, large populations living in close proximity to the building can increase the likelihood of expired specimens turning up in wall voids, causing a risk of secondary scavengers. If outdoor activity is heavy and control is deemed necessary, the following suggestions will prove helpful: Remove obvious harborage areas against the building. Remove heavy mulch and dense vegetation from the vicinity of exterior walls and, if feasible, replace with gravel. Seal cracks and holes in exterior walls, and apply hardware cloth to vents and other openings that cannot be sealed.

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Fact Sheet: Vole

Image of Adult: by Leo Papandrau from Encyclopedia of Life: http://eol.org/data_objects/15633814

Image of Damage from <http://www.maine.gov/agriculture/pesticides/gotpests/othercritters/images/voles/vole-tree-damage-big.jpg>

Resources: <http://www.ipm.ucdavis.edu/PMG/PESTNOTES/pn7439.html>