

## POCKET GOPHER



### DESCRIPTION

Pocket Gophers are medium sized rodents ranging from 21 to 38 centimeters long and weighing between 94 and 104 grams. They have large, furred cheek pouches they use to carry food through their underground tunnels. Pocket gophers have stout forefeet with large claws, and continuously growing incisor teeth that are always exposed. They have small, yet very functional, ears and eyes. A nearly naked tail allows them to be able to navigate backgrounds quickly through its tunnel. Colours can range from nearly black to pale brown to white.

### HABITS

Pocket Gophers are rarely seen, and live most of their lives beneath the ground in burrow systems that are often elaborate. They spend warm months collecting food (vegetation only) to tide them over for the winter. Pocket gophers are capable of surviving the harshest of winters and can rapidly expand when conditions are good. Unfortunately, good conditions mean high quality crops such as alfalfa. These crops can quickly be destroyed as they feed on roots and make entrances to their burrows, usually resulting in a fan-shaped mound of dirt above ground.

### BIOLOGY

Pocket gophers usually live alone within their burrow system, except when females are caring for their young or during mating season. Pocket gophers reach sexual maturity at approximately 1 year of age and can live up to 3 years. Mating usually occurs in late winter and early spring, resulting in 1 litter per year; in irrigated sites, gophers can produce up to 3 litters per year. Litters usually average 5 to 6 young.

### CONTROL

Controlling pocket gophers can be done by using properly labelled and registered rodenticides, trapping, asphyxiation via Giant Destroyers, or by shooting.

- **Rodenticides** are various types of baits that rodents can feed on in their burrows. Rodenticides are an effective tool in non-residential areas as the bait is inside the hole and the hole is covered up, to see if the bait worked or not if the hole is dug out. Bait is to be placed directly into the burrow and the hole or mound is covered with soil. Once



the rodent has eaten enough bait the rodents will die within its burrow removing the chances of secondary poisoning of pets and other species.

- **Trapping** is another method that will reduce these pests in areas that are not of a fine-turf. The gopher will be trapped inside the hole. Frequent inspections are necessary to use this type of method.
- **Asphyxiation** via Giant Destroyers. If the burrows are at least 5 metres away from any foundation or the building foot print, you can purchase an over the counter product called Giant Destroyer. This product looks like a little piece of dynamite which is lit with a wick and then placed into the burrows chamber and covered with dirt. The Giant Destroyer will release enough sulfur dioxide gas into the burrow to rid your location of these pests.
  - 1) Fill in most, not all, ground squirrel/gopher holes with dirt.
  - 2) Light Giant Destroyers (like a stick of dynamite) and drop them in the remaining holes.
  - 3) Cover up the holes. If you see smoke coming from a hole, you may have missed one.
  - 4) If you notice in a day or so that the Giant Destroyers have been pushed out, you might want to redo the application, as they might not have been in the hole far enough.

**DO NOT USE THIS METHOD IF THE HOLES ARE CLOSE TO A HOME.** Giant Destroyers use a sulphur gas that can permeate through foundations, so if there is a risk that the holes are too close, do not use them!

- **Shooting** can also be effective for removing rodents but only where it is lawful.
- Please do not use water hoses to fill up burrows.