



## WHAT IS A VOLE AND WHAT DO THEY DO?



As the heavy snow of winter begins its melt as the warmth of spring begins, some may begin to see that their lawns are covered with matted pathways or yellow grass tunnels. This is the characteristic sign that voles have been travelling under the snow all winter as they were searching for roots of plants, grass and seeds. Many people will want to control this pest as it enjoys eating the succulent plants and vegetables in people gardens during the summer months and causes a great deal of damage in the winter and spring to lawns.

Voles look like a house mouse but have shorter tails, rounded face and head and smaller ears. The vole has a dark brown coat with a greyish belly and in the winter it usually turns white whereas the house mouse has a grey fur coat. Positive identification of the pest is key so the proper pest management strategy can be implemented. Improper identification can lead to incorrect techniques and control options being attempted and no control occurring. Providing pictures of the damage, examples of the animal, its droppings, or any other evidence will help the Pest Management Professional the ability to determine your pest problem and a method to rectify it.

### PREVENTION

Eliminate high grass cover and maintain a three foot grass-free radius around the base of trees.

### CHEMICAL CONTROL

If all methods are inadequate and baiting becomes absolutely necessary, use small amounts of a domestic product which is registered for the control of voles (field rodents). Use according to label instructions only.

### NON-CHEMICAL OPTIONS

**GUARDS:** Encircle tree trunks with 6 mm (1/4 inch) mesh hardware cloth. This should be set 76 mm (3 inches) into the ground and extend beyond normal snow levels. There is other commercial material available which will also protect against other pests. Examine guards annually although if properly installed they will last for several years.

**TRAPPING:** Snap traps may be used to eliminate a vole problem. Place traps around fencing, around trees or at angles and flush to the ground in runways. They may be baited with peanut butter, oatmeal or birdseed.



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