

Moles & Voles

- There are two mole species in BC: the **coast mole** (*Scapanus orarius*) and **Townsend's mole** (*Scapanus townsendii*), and several species of **voles** (subfamily *Arvicolinae*)
- Under the *BC Wildlife Act*, moles and voles can only be trapped using devices listed in the BC Hunting & Trapping Regulations



Mole

Understanding Moles & Voles

Moles and voles are small, shy animals that are rarely seen by most people. Moles have small eyes and ears, and large padded forelegs well adapted to spending most of their lives in their tunnels. Voles resemble mice but can be distinguished by their small eyes and ears and relatively short tail. Voles burrow in the winter, and also cache their food underground.

Moles and Voles...

- moles typically have one litter of 3-7 babies each spring, and are independent at approximately 4 weeks old
- voles only live for one year, but may have 4 or 5 litters of 2-5 babies in the summer
- moles eat insects like worms and grubs
- voles eat plant matter like grasses, seeds, flowers, fruit and vegetables

Humane Choices

The BC SPCA does not support killing moles and voles for nuisance reasons.

Relocation of adult animals should only be done outside the breeding season within the animal's home range, and as per the *BC Wildlife Act* (within 1km on Vancouver & Gulf Islands, 10km in rest of province). Killing is rarely necessary and control methods should be selected to cause the least harm to the animal's welfare. If attractants have not been removed, more animals may arrive, so follow-up monitoring is needed.

The BC SPCA strongly encourages non-lethal, non-contact methods. Prevention and exclusion comes first, followed by deterrence, and if necessary, eviction.



Vole

Did you know?

Moles and voles mix and aerate soil, creating better conditions for plants, and are valuable sources of food for owls and hawks.

Common Conflicts

Moles and voles are attracted to moist, nutrient rich garden soil and can create conflict with their shallow tunneling and molehills that build up as a result of entrances and deep tunneling.

Conflict Resolution

Moles are solitary territorial animals – they are not likely to survive if trapped and moved from their tunnel system, and may get into serious fights if they encounter other moles. Vole populations may fluctuate substantially, so conflicts with voles often resolve themselves without intervention. If animal is at risk, cage traps may be used for release within home range, and both may be taken to a wildlife rehabilitator for treatment. If in critical distress, a veterinarian or wildlife rehabilitator may euthanize. For more information, *flip page over*.



Recommended Actions & Methods

Prevention & Exclusion Before any conflict, and to prevent future issues

Remove potential food sources

- ✓ Secure garbage bins and compost
- ✓ Bird feeders not overflowing, no pet food outside
- ✓ Collect fruit fallen on ground
- ✓ Use non-toxic diatomaceous earth to prevent soil insects

Modify yards and gardens to prevent tunneling

- ✓ Block access to flower beds by burying hardware cloth (0.5cm mesh) or installing a concrete edge 20-30cm underground
- ✓ To prevent further damage, flatten tunnels by hand or using a lawn roller prior to mowing
- ✓ To confirm tunnel use – loosely cover hole with leaves, newspaper or straw; if present, animal can push it away and re-open

Deterrence

Use mild humane harassment techniques

- ✓ Use castor bean or castor-oil plants, or other plant extract repellents
- ✓ Soak flower bulbs in capsaicin repellent to deter voles
- ✓ Provide barn owl boxes to encourage natural predation
- ✓ Follow all prevention and exclusion steps above

These are legal, regulated methods - but they are **not recommended*** as they can cause animal suffering, may be high risk to non-targets, and/or are difficult to administer; legality must also be confirmed according to local bylaws and/or regulations

- Carbon dioxide or carbon monoxide - using pure gas cylinder into sealed chamber with regulator
- Shot to brain of trapped or free-ranging animal
- Penetrating captive bolt
- Spring trap (e.g. scissor or claw-style)
- Snap trap
- Manually applied blunt trauma that induces immediate unconsciousness
- Cervical dislocation

*email wildlifecontrol@spca.bc.ca for information on these methods

It is **illegal** to use...

- Glue traps
- Bait poisons or chloroform
- Fumigant poisons
- Drowning or suffocation
- Leghold or foot snare
- Killing neck snare
- Carbon monoxide by vehicle exhaust
- Electrocution of conscious animal
- Freezing (including dry ice)

