



4-H leader Jerry Myers demonstrates how to handle a dairy heifer in the showing during a recent Carroll County 4-H Dairy Workshop. Other subjects covered were: clipping a dairy animal, preparing for show day, and training a calf to lead. The Maryland Cooperative Extension Service's programs are open to all citizens without regard to race, color, sex, handicap, religion, age or national origin.

Ridges and tunnels indicate moles

NEWARK, Del. — Last night when you went to bed, your lawn was perfectly smooth. This morning, though, it's riddled with humps and tunnels. It seems you've been visited by a mole.

The common mole — a furry, gray, burrowing mammal with tiny eyes and a long, tapering snout — lives underground and seldom ventures out of its burrow. You may never see your mole, but the ridges and tunnels in your lawn plainly indicate its presence.

Discovering a mole on your property may cause worries about your garden crops, although some people consider moles beneficial for the garden. These little animals, 6 to 8 inches long, have tremendous appetites and feed almost exclusively on soil insects, earthworms, and especially grubs. A mole can rid your lawn of half its weight in grubs and soil insects each day.

Unlike rodents, with which they're often confused, moles don't eat plant roots, bulbs or tubers. When tunneling in search of insects, however, they may damage underground plant parts. Severely damaged plants may indicate that mice have been using the mole tunnels as a shortcut to your garden.

In many cases there's no pressing need to control moles, says University of Delaware extension agricultural agent Bob Hochmuth. However, if they become an unbearable nuisance, you have several control options.

Spraying the ground with insecticide will reduce the grub and soil insect population, causing moles to look elsewhere for food. You may have to repeat the treatment later in the season, so the moles won't return as soil insect numbers increase.

Alternatively, trapping moles can be quick and effective if you're careful to place the trap in the right tunnel. Moles usually build permanent, or "active" tunnels along fences, borders, and other protected places. They also build secondary tunnels they seldom reuse. To be effective, a trap must be located in an active tunnel. To find out which tunnels are active, cave in many of the tunnels with your foot and mark the spots. The following morning, check to see which tunnels have been rebuilt. Locate your trap in one of these active tunnels.

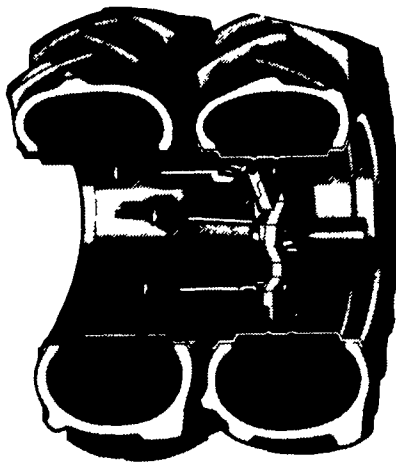
If you don't mind having a mole in your lawn, but want to protect an isolated planting or flower bed, you can do it with wire fencing.

Bury the fence posts 12 inches into the ground around the area you want to protect. Bend the top of the fence outward at a 90-degree angle.

Inserting mothballs into the tunnels may drive moles elsewhere, but this approach is only practical in a small area. Gassing is dangerous and generally ineffective, Hochmuth says, since it's almost impossible to fill all the tunnels with lethal amounts of poison gas. Poison baits are likewise dangerous to children, pets, and other non-target animals, and should not be used around a home yard.



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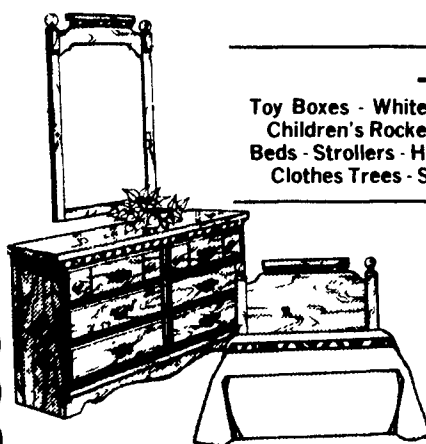
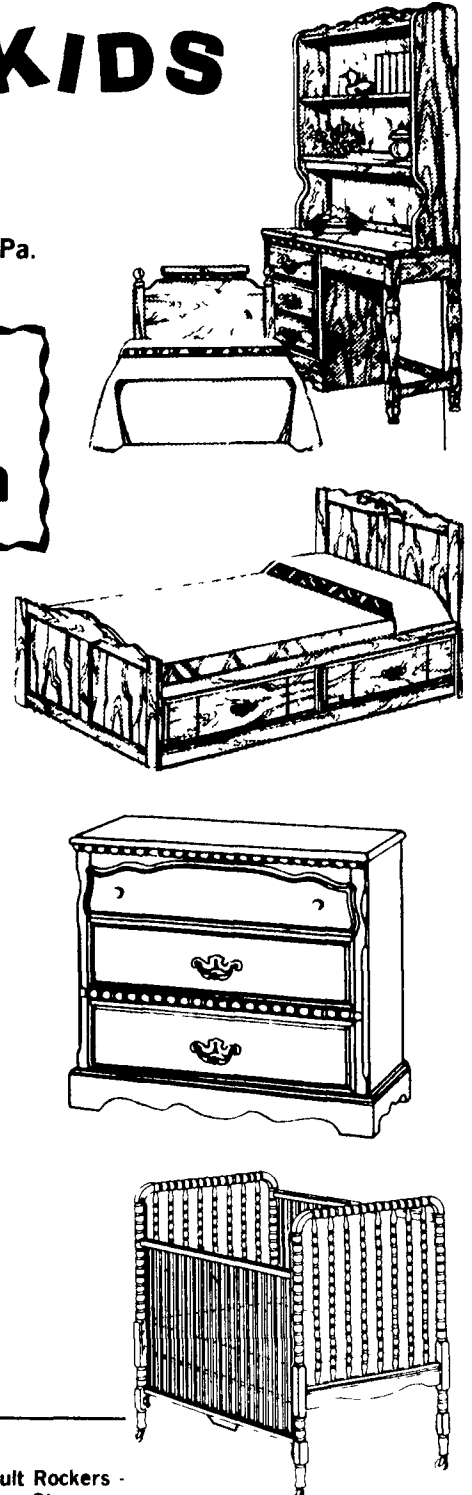
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