

# Moles, Voles, Shrews: Notes From The Underground

UNIVERSITY PARK (Centre Co.) — What do chainsaws, beavers, and voles have in common? They all can damage trees, according to a wildlife biologist in Penn State's College of Agricultural Sciences.

"Homeowners and businesses can lose a lot of trees and other plantings to voles," said Gary

San Julian, professor of wildlife resources. "Now that fall's approaching, questions about voles increase."

Voles are small chunky rodents with short tails, blunt noses, and bead-like eyes. In Pennsylvania, two species can damage plants — the pine vole and the meadow vole. The pine

vole lives in tunnels, San Julian explains, while the larger meadow vole builds nests and "runs" near or at the surface.

Pine and meadow voles damage trees by gnawing the bark near ground level. Pine voles also weaken trees by gnawing their roots. While teethmarks from rabbits are larger and more

uniform, a vole's marks are distinctly tiny and irregular, occurring at various angles and in random patches. In winter, voles can reach surprising heights by tunneling through the snow.

"If you plant flower bulbs in the fall, and they don't come up the following spring, you could have a problem with pine voles,"

he says. "I've seen pine voles take out some monkey grass bulbs so fast it seemed like a cartoon."

Voles often are confused with moles or shrews, San Julian says. Because control methods for one animal may not work for another, it's important to know which species you're dealing with.

"Shrews eat insects — they're not a problem to anybody," he says. "Shrews are much smaller than moles or voles. One can fit inside a tablespoon

"You can tell a mole from a vole by it's paws," he adds, "While voles have small paws, moles have large spade-like front paws that they use for digging." Moles also have pointy, naked snouts and appear not to have eyes or ears.

"Some people don't like the spongy feeling mole tunnels make in their lawn," San Julian says, "but moles actually are beneficial. They eat grubs and insects, and help to condition and aerate the soil. If you really must control them, you can buy spear or choke traps at a hardware store. Also, a lawn insecticide will remove the moles' food sources and discourage them from using your yard."

To control voles, San Julian suggests setting mouse traps. Place the traps near holes or runs, baited with an oatmeal-peanut butter mixture or a small piece of apple. Then cover the traps with a large flower pot or box, making sure the traps can still close.

Voles can be live-trapped, but it is a good idea to release them at least a half-mile away in an overgrown field, or other places where they won't cause problems for other people.

"With large populations in orchards or Christmas tree farms, you may need to use toxicants," San Julian says. "These pesticides only can be used by certified pesticide applicators or their staff. To locate a wildlife pest control operator, check with your county extension office, or look through the Yellow Pages."

Two fact sheets, "Wildlife Damage Control 5: Moles" and "Wildlife Damage Control 9: Voles," list additional tips for controlling damage from voles and moles. Single copies are available free of charge by contacting your county Penn State Cooperative Extension and Outreach office, or by calling the College of Agricultural Sciences Publications Distribution Center at (814) 865-6713.

Other wildlife damage control publications also are available, including fact sheets on rabies, woodpeckers, black bears, bats, woodchucks, cottontail rabbits, tree squirrels, skunks, and geese, ducks and swans.

## Lycoming Lists Dairy Show Winners



Grand champion and senior champion Milking shorthorn was shown by Melissa Wolfe, left, Northumberland, with her junior 2-year-old. Reserve grand champion and reserve senior champion was shown by Melissa Wolfe, with her junior 3-year-old, held by Alicia Wolfe, second from left. Janele Hearn, left, Lycoming County Dairy Maid, is presenting the trophies: grand champion trophy sponsored by Farmland Dairies, Wallington, and reserve grand champion trophy sponsored by R.W. Bird Trucking Inc. Pleasant Gap.



Grand champion Brown Swiss and senior champion Ayrshire was shown by Alicia Wolfe, second from left, Northumberland, with her 4-year-old. Melissa Daly, second from right, Lycoming County Dairy Princess, presents the grand champion trophy, sponsored by Thomas Dunlap Farm Equipment, Jersey Shore. Reserve grand champion Brown Swiss was shown by Van Kuren Farm, Montrose, with their winter calf held by Steve Van Kuren, left. Janele Hearn, Lycoming County Dairy Maid, right, is presenting the reserve grand champion trophy, sponsored by Ric-Mar Restaurant, Northumberland.



Grand champion Ayrshire and senior champion Ayrshire was shown by Fogleman Farm, Muncy, with their aged cow, held by Chris Fogleman, second from left, presented the grand champion trophy, sponsored by Ric-Mar Restaurant, Northumberland, is Lycoming County Dairy Maid, Janele Hearn, right. Reserve grand champion Ayrshire and reserve senior champion Ayrshire was shown by Fogleman Farm, Muncy, with their senior 2-year-old, held by Randi Fogleman, second from right. Melissa Daly, Lycoming County Dairy Princess, left, congratulates the winners.



Grand champion and senior champion Milking Shorthorn was shown by Melissa Wolfe, left, Northumberland, with her junior 2-year-old. Melissa also had the reserve grand champion and reserve senior champion with her junior 3-year-old, held by Alicia Wolfe.



Grand champion Jersey and senior champion Jersey was shown by EDU-RU Jerseys, Boalsburg, with their 5-year-old cow, held by Joyce Harpster, left. Presenting the grand champion trophy is Janele Hearn, right, Lycoming County Dairy Maid, sponsored by Lowe's Super Duper, Clarkstown. Reserve grand champion and reserve senior champion Jersey was shown by EDU-RU Jerseys, Boalsburg, with their aged cow, held by Eugenia Harpster. Presenting the reserve grand champion trophy is Melissa Daly, second from right, Lycoming County Dairy Princess, sponsored by Pineknot Farms, Northumberland.



Grand champion Guernsey and junior champion Guernsey were shown by Van Kuren Farm, Montrose, with their fall yearling, held by Steve Van Kuren, second from left, Janele Hearn, Lycoming County dairy maid, right, is presenting the grand champion trophy, sponsored by Bowersox Truck Sales and Service, Williamsport, and the junior champion trophy, sponsored by Fisher and Thompson, Mifflinburg. Reserve grand champion guernsey and reserve junior champion guernsey was shown by Dayton Berger, left, Orangeville, with his summer yearling. Melissa Daly, Lycoming County Dairy Princess, second from right, presents the reserve grand champion trophy, sponsored by Lebanon Valley Farms, Lebanon, and the reserve junior champion trophy, sponsored by Pa. Junior Guernsey Breeders Association.

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