

# Got Voles?

AKA Field Mice or Meadow Mice

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## Damage Identification

The most obvious sign of vole presence is well-defined, shallow surface tunnels, or “runways”, across the lawn or garden area. Their runways look like trails of dead grass about 1-2 inches wide, or ditches of bare soil circa 1/2 inch deep. Moles, on the other hand, leave wide volcano-shaped mounds of excavated soil behind. There are no mounds around vole’s burrows, and the diameter of the openings is like that of a broom handle. Furthermore, their burrows can be identified by small greenish droppings that turn gray or brown with time and look similar to mouse droppings.



Not only can voles destroy your lawn, they can kill your trees too. Still and all, there are other rodents that can leave gnaw marks and girdling damage on trees in your yard, particularly rabbits. To distinguish between vole and rabbit havoc, take a good look at the injured tree trunk: The former pest has very small teeth, thus it leaves small, irregular bite marks at various angles. In contrast, the girdling of rabbits is characterized by neat, clean cuts with a 45° angle.

## Vole Control Measures

When you ensured that the pest disturbing your peace of mind is, indeed, the field mouse, it’s time to take action! And the sooner, the better. The matter is that voles are very prolific breeders, and they can produce 4-6 litters per year. Litter sizes vary from 3 to 6. So, if you postpone facing the problem for later, they will quickly colonize the area and do much harm to your plot of land. Broadly speaking, control falls into three categories: habitat modification, exclusion, population reduction/removal. To ensure a long-term result, you should implement all three measures simultaneously. These measures are described below.

### Vole traps for live capture

Voles can be removed humanely by using live traps. Rotate the position and type of trap every few days as voles can be very savvy. Use apple bits, oatmeal or peanut butter to lure the voles into the traps. The problem with such cage traps is that you’ll have to relocate the animals after you’ve trapped them – somewhere where they won’t cause damage to someone else’s property, preferably at a minimum of half mile away from your place. Trapping is a reasonable solution only for small populations.



### Poisons for vole control

Poisoning is often the first method that occurs to people. Though poison can be an effective vole killer, it is potentially hazardous to children, pets and other wildlife. The best and safest poison baits are Warfarin-based. These baits can be purchased at most hardware stores. Meadow mice must feed on the bait for about 5 days to show its full effect. Always read the product label and obey the safety precautions. To reduce the hazard of non-target animals taking the bait, place it directly into burrow openings or use special bait containers. Alternately, you can put the bait in open-ended boxes. Rotate the position and type of trap every few days. Place the traps near the surface tunnels so they will be lured to the trap, if there are no poisoned voles near the trap after two weeks move the trap closer to the surface tunnels and/or the burrow.



### Prevent Voles

Voles like dense, heavy vegetative cover, mulch and weeds because it provides them with food and protects them from predators. Make your yard inhospitable to voles! Cut back brush, mow, weed and create a clean space.