



How to Succeed Against Gophers

Habits of the Pocket Gopher

The pocket gopher is a solitary creature which spends nearly all of its life beneath the surface of the ground, generally emerging only at night to feed near an entrance or to clean out its burrow. The burrow system of a single pocket gopher may include as much as 800 feet of tunnels, which are 2 to 5 inches in diameter. The main or foraging runways usually are from 4 to 8 inches beneath the surface, although they may be somewhat deeper or shallower. Side tunnels and small chambers are used for nests and for deposits of food, feces and extra soil. Some of the side tunnels may go as far as 5 to 6 feet below the surface. Surface openings usually are plugged with soil, except when the gopher is foraging near the opening or cleaning out its burrow. Soil thus pushed from the burrow forms the mounds which characterize the gopher infested area. Mounds have a horse-shoe-shaped depression on one side, where the hole is located. The burrow system of a single gopher will have several mounds. One gopher may displace as much as 3 tons of earth. As previously suggested, the pocket gopher leads a lonely life. Seldom is more than one gopher found in a single burrow system, except during the mating season. Highly territorial, a gopher will not tolerate other gophers invading their space.

The Mating Season

The mating season is in the spring and females usually produce only one litter of from 3 to 10 young in a year, between March and June, young gophers leave their parental burrows in middle or late summer, traveling above ground to new territories or to old ones which have been vacated by other gophers. Pocket gophers are most active in the spring and fall. In the summer, heat drives them into the deeper reaches of their burrow systems, and foraging activity slows considerably. Trapping and the use of poison baits are the two main methods to control pocket gophers. To trap a gopher, the main runway must be located by scraping the dirt from a fresh mound on the side where the horseshoe shaped depression is found until a tunnel plugged with the fresh dirt is discovered. This tunnel is then opened to the main runway and a small trap is set.

Proper Bait Placement

A quicker and more effective means is the use of poisoned baits. To poison gophers, the main runway must be located by probing about 12 to 18 inches from the mound on the side of the horseshoe shaped depression with the gopher getter. When the runway is found, press on top of the handle letting the inside valve shaft telescope, pull unit out of the ground, holding down the button. The bait automatically drops into the gopher runway. For baits to be effective, the bait cannot be fouled or contaminated with earth. Therefore, the use of the Gopher Getter will assure that the bait will be cleanly placed in the runway.

Finding the Main Tunnel

In succeeding with the gopher trap, it is important to find the main tunnel. To find the main tunnel, start at the horseshoe shaped mound of soil. On the flat side, probe with a stick or rod out from that flat side about 12 to 18 inches. When the probe sinks quickly due to the lack of resistance, you have located the main tunnel. It is at this location that you should dig out the earth to expose the tunnel. Set the traps according to the instructions.

Covering for success

Cover the hole with leaves, a board or a cloth sack to darken the trap area. If you have dug out the mound area, do not use a board to cover the hole because this will not allow air to flow properly into the tunnel. The lack of light makes the gopher travel towards the trap. After trapping a gopher, dispose of the gopher into the tunnel and cover hole. This will discourage future use of the area by other gophers.

