

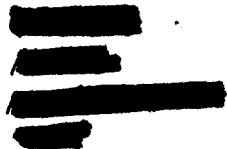


Control of . . .
Field Mice
Pocket Gophers
Ground Squirrels

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GROUND SQUIRRELS

Three common species are the "Flickertail" or Richardson ground squirrel, well distributed over the eastern two-thirds of the state; the 13-lined ground squirrel, often called a "striped gopher" found over the entire state; and the rather large, gray Franklin ground squirrel found in the eastern half of the state.

The adult flickertail is of a rather uniform yellowish to grayish color, about 12 inches long including a 3-inch tail. The 13-lined ground squirrel is readily identified by alternating dark brown and whitish stripes the length of the body. The Franklin squirrel is a large gray ground squirrel reaching a length of 14 inches, including a moderately bushy tail about 5 inches long.

When ground squirrel damage is not serious and only limited control is desired, plinking with a .22 rifle provides hours of recreation.

Young, potential hunters can be introduced to safe use of firearms and sharpen their shooting eye by this sport. A summer of ground squirrel shooting can improve the hunter's chance of killing his deer in the fall.

The recreational value of these animals is tremendous. They increase the length of time the hunter can use firearms during the year.

For intensive control, place a teaspoonful of the poison bait just outside the entrance of each burrow. Scatter bait thinly enough so livestock cannot pick it up. Sheep and poultry should be excluded from baited areas. The bait should not be placed inside the entrances of the burrow or in the loose dirt which has been thrown out. A quart of bait should treat about 60 burrows. It usually will be necessary to go over the area a second time.

Ground squirrels, the flickertail in particular, have a rather long period of hibernation in North Dakota. Control must be begun early in the spring as soon as the squirrels are active and usually cannot be successfully continued after mid-August - sometimes earlier.

Economical control, though not quite as efficient as that obtained in the spring, can be secured at any time the rodents are out in the open.

After treatment, daily checks should be made to pick up dead animals. If left, they may be taken by pets. Strychnine in the ground squirrels' stomach can kill dogs and cats.

POCKET GOPHERS

Two species of pocket gophers found in the state are the Mississippi Valley species in the Red River Valley area and the plains' species in the central and northern areas. They feed on roots, which they secure in their digging operations as tunnels are constructed. The extent of the workings of an individual pocket gopher will be indicated by the series of mounds of loose dirt thrown up.

Damage by pocket gophers will depend upon the value of the crops in which they are working. It is not uncommon to find 6 to 10 of the animals per acre in good stands of alfalfa or sweet clover. One pocket gopher in a patch of potatoes or carrots will destroy large amounts of the crop.

Pocket gophers are efficiently controlled with poisoned bait or special pocket gopher traps. Peeled carrots, parsnips and sweet potatoes make good bait. Cut them into pieces 1/2 inch square by 1 inch long. Wash, drain and sprinkle over them 1/8 ounce of powdered strychnine per gallon. Stir to insure even distribution of the poison. Use the baits soon after they are prepared. Keep baits from children, irresponsible persons and domestic animals.

An equally good bait is prepared in the same manner as ground squirrel bait by substituting 20 pounds of clean barley for the 14 pounds of oats. This bait is not perishable and is much easier to handle.

Place baits in the main runways of the pocket gophers, near new mounds. A probe, such as an end-gate rod or a broom handle, can be used to locate the runway. Then drop baits through the probe holes.

Use 1 tablespoon full of barley bait or 1 square fresh vegetable bait. Close it to prevent entrance of light into the runway.

For more detailed instructions secure Wildlife Leaflet 340 on Pocket Gopher Control from your County Extension Agent. For information on mechanical burrow builder machine get Extension Circular A-368.

FIELD MICE

Fifteen or more species of field mice are found in the state. Under favorable conditions field mice may occasionally reach plague proportions in local areas. In addition to feeding on planted and growing grains, they feed on stored grain where available. Mouse control is especially important to the small grain farmer, since mice are a principal offender in contaminating grain with droppings and urine, making food or malting grain subject to seizure under Federal Pure Food Laws.

Grain storage sites in rural areas should be checked frequently in the fall following harvest as several species have a habit of moving into shelter from the fields. Mice frequently girdle trees at the ground line under snow where damage is not noticed until spring.

Strychnine-oat bait is the most practical means of control. Baiting may be done as a preventive measure in the fall, especially around grain storage bins or tree plantings. Bait is placed by scattering it lightly in mouse trails or "tunnels" through the grass, in artificially made mouse trails or in shallow furrows. When poultry or livestock are present, protected baiting stations can be made from boxes, tin cans, tile or even by covering bait spots with a forkful of hay or straw thrown over a post or small branch laying on the ground.

BAIT SOURCES

Ready-made baits may be secured through commercial formulators. See your County Extension Agent for additional information on sources and costs.

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