

Vole



A **vole** is a small [rodent](#) resembling a [mouse](#) but with a stouter body, a shorter, hairy tail, a slightly rounder head, smaller ears and eyes, and differently formed [molars](#) (high-crowned and with angular cusps instead of low-crowned and with rounded cusps). There are approximately 155 [species](#) of voles. They are sometimes known as meadow mice or field mice in North America. Vole species form the [subfamily Arvicolinae](#) with the [lemmings](#) and the [muskrats](#).

Description

Voies are small rodents that grow to 3–9 in (7.6–23 cm), depending on the species. They can have five to 10 litters per year. [Gestation](#) lasts for three weeks and the young voles reach [sexual maturity](#) in a month. As a result of this [exponential growth](#), vole populations can grow very large within a very short period of time. Since litters average five to 10 young, a single pregnant vole can result in a hundred or more active voles in less than a year.

Voies are commonly mistaken for other small animals. [Moles](#), [gophers](#), [mice](#), [rats](#) and even [shrews](#) have similar characteristics and [behavioral](#) tendencies. Since voles will commonly use [burrows](#) with many exit holes, they can be mistaken for gophers or some kind of [ground squirrel](#).

They will readily thrive on small plants. Like shrews, they will eat dead animals and like mice or rats, they can live on almost any nut or fruit. Additionally, voles will target plants more than most other small animals, making their presence evident. Voies will readily [girdle](#) small trees and ground cover much like a [porcupine](#). This girdling can easily kill young plants and is not healthy for trees or other shrubs.

Voies will often eat succulent root systems and will burrow under plants or ground cover and eat away until the plant is dead. [Bulbs](#) in the ground are another favorite target for voies; their excellent burrowing and tunneling give them access to sensitive areas without clear or early warning. The presence of large numbers of voies is often only identifiable after they have destroyed a number of plants.^[1] However, like other burrowing rodents, they also play beneficial roles, including dispersing nutrients throughout the upper soil layers.^[2]

The preferred diet of the mole is a carnivorous one. The mole will eat worms, grubs and adult insects. Neither the eastern mole nor the star-nosed mole is a rodent, so any gnawing damage you find on plants is unlikely to have been perpetrated by a mole. But rodents do exploit mole tunnels to wage subterranean war on plants, thereby making the mole an accessory to the crime!

The vole, by contrast, **is** a rodent. A vole will gnaw at the base of a tree or shrub, especially in winter; thus the metal guards sold to prevent such vole damage. A vole may also damage flower bulbs and potatoes in the garden. But mainly, the vole will eat the stems and blades of lawn grass. And the runways they leave behind in the process make for an unsightly lawn. Voies can also inadvertently damage plants by burrowing into the root systems of trees and shrubs, causing young specimens to experience dieback or to begin to lean.

What is the difference between Mole and Vole?

- Moles are marsupials while voles are rodents.
- Moles feed on a carnivorous diet that consists of fossorial invertebrates whereas voles are vegetarians with preference to fruits, nuts, and succulent roots.
- Moles are found in the subterranean tunnels more than on the ground whereas voles mostly inhabit the ground and rest or sleep inside the underground tunnels. Therefore, voles are observed more often than moles.
- There are sharp and spade-like claws in moles but not in voles.
- It is a sharp and pointed snout in mole but, not in voles.
- The whole body is cylindrical in moles but not in voles.

Voles, moles and gophers are often lumped together in discussions regarding wildlife problems that result in torn up, damaged landscaping. This is because all three utilize tunnel systems and cause damage to plants, roots and beautiful lawns. Outside this similarity, they are actually quite unique from each other.

Voles – Field Mice

Voles, also known as meadow mice, are often mistaken for moles because they sometimes utilize and live in the same tunnel system as moles. Vole tunnels and paths will continue on top of the ground and can be very easily seen after snow melts. Meadow mice will attack plant foliage above ground, and also consume roots. Moles are often times mistakenly blamed for vole activity. Often, it takes a true mole expert to tell the difference. If the hole in question has plant matter around and in it, it may actually be a vole hole.



Moles or Voles?

It can be a little difficult sometimes to identify if your wildlife problem and damaged lawn is being caused by moles or voles. Moles primarily eat insects whereas voles and field mice enjoy plant life as well. Many times you can differentiate between a mole entrance and a vole entrance by looking at the blades and different pieces of foliage at the open opening of the hole. This means that if you find an open hole with grass wide ridges on top of the soil, you may be looking at a vole problem, not a mole issue. If you see plants near an open hole that have been chewed on, it may be damage done specifically by a field vole.

Identifying

Moles



A Vole is basically a small field mouse and it looks like just that, a mouse. For the most part a vole actually looks nothing like a mole. Moles have cylindrical bodies with large, clawed, paddle like forefeet with eyes and ears that are difficult to see. They also have slim, flexible and pointy noses, and short tails. The mole physique can be a little creepy to behold for some individuals, especially the star nosed mole which has a very strange, nasty looking appendage on it's face. Moles will occasionally leave their tunnel in search of food sources or when flooding occurs, but primarily they live underground and can be difficult to catch a glimpse of sometimes.