

Managing Voles

Voles, also called meadow mice or field mice, are usually brown or gray in color and can be four to eight and a half inches in length depending on the species. Voles prefer areas with heavy ground cover of grasses or grass-like plants. Voles eat a variety of plants including grasses and forbs or flowering plants, bark primarily in fall and winter, and store seeds in late summer and fall.



Voles do not hibernate and are active day and night. They build tunnels and surface runways to get around. Voles are prey for many predators including coyotes, snakes, coyotes, hawks, owls and weasels.

Damage Caused by Voles

Voles can damage orchards, ornamentals and trees due to their feeding habit on seedlings and mature trees. They can ruin lawns, golf courses and ground covers as a result of their extensive runway and tunnel systems that can displace water from irrigation systems.

The easiest way to determine if voles are on your property is to spot their extensive surface runway system with numerous burrow openings. Voles will create runways one to two inches in width.

Voles do not pose a public health threat but are capable of carrying diseases. Be careful when handling voles and always wear protective clothing or gloves.

Damage Prevention and Control Methods

- **Exclusion** - Voles can be deterred from trees and seedlings by placing a ¼ inch mesh hardware cloth fence buried six inches deep around the desired area.
- **Landscape practices** – Keeping up with landscaping can help deter voles from your yard. Eliminating weeds, ground cover and litter in and around lawns reduces the capacity of these areas to support voles. Mowing and irrigating your lawn regularly also helps remove their runway system.
- **Trapping** – Mouse snap traps can be used to control a small vole population. Traps should be placed perpendicular to their runway using a peanut-butter oatmeal mixture or apple slices as bait. The easiest times of year to trap voles are fall and late winter.

Individual management of voles is permitted ONLY on a resident's property. Managing voles in parks and open space is the responsibility of the Metro District. For more information review [Voles](#), published by the Department of Agriculture, or call Nick Adamson, open space supervisor, at 720-240-5917 or nadamson@highlandsranch.org.

May 2009