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Pocket Gopher Control

H. L. Parten



EXTENSION FOLDER NO. 30

Published in furtherance of Agricultural Extension,
Act of May 8, 1914. F. W. Peck, Director, Agricultural
Extension Division, Department of Agriculture,
Co-operating with U. S. Department of Agriculture.

THE pocket gopher is the most easily controlled rodent infesting Minnesota farms. Various poisons and traps on the market have not given the desired control, owing to the difficulty of setting the traps and depositing the poisons in the proper runways.

Poisoning is the only method of control whereby a great deal can be done in a short time with a small amount of work and expense. The gophers on the average farm can be killed in one or two applications of the poison.

Poison should be handled with great care. The poison container should be labeled **Poison** and placed out of the reach of children. All utensils used in mixing the bait should be thoroughly cleaned after using them.

The following poison used on potatoes or carrots killed all the gophers in one or two applications:

- 1/8 ounce sodium bicarbonate (baking soda)
- 1/8 ounce powdered strychnia alkaloid
- 1/80 ounce saccharin

This mixture is a fluffy powder and should be placed in a salt shaker or a can with a sifter top. The bait should be cut into slices about $\frac{1}{2}$ inch square. The poison is sifted on the bait and the pieces turned over in order to apply a little of the poison to each piece.

Caution: Do not use much of the poison as it will act as an emetic. All that is necessary is to have a few crystals of poison on each piece. Better results are obtained by too light rather than by too heavy an application.

Necessary Appliances

1. A sharpened broomstick or other stick, three to four feet long, which may have a wire loop to aid in making a hole for the poison.

2. An old pump-handle and rod or a piece of No. 4 or No. 5 wire ($\frac{1}{4}$ inch in diameter) and 18 inches long, to locate the main runway.

This wire should be slightly enlarged at the tip, so there will be no side friction when probing. This can be done by heating the end of the wire to a white heat and upsetting it. This should then be sharpened and put on the end of the wire with solder.

Find the main runway of the gopher burrows. The main runway can easily be found by observing the shape of the mound and the location of the plug. The mounds are of two general types, heart-shaped or straight on one side and curved on the other. These mounds indicate the direction in which the soil was thrown out by the gopher. The main runway is on the straight side of the mound which shows an indentation. On this side is the plug. The plug is the last soil the gopher has pushed out in order to close out the light. The probing wire should be pushed into the soil 6 to 18 inches from the mound. The runway will vary in depth 3 to 12 inches (average depth 4 to 6 inches). The hole made by the probing wire should be enlarged by the sharpened broomstick, describing a circle. This motion clears the point and does not disturb the runway. Two or three pieces of poisoned bait are then dropped into the main runway and the hole closed **immediately** so as not to allow the light to enter

the runway. The pocket gopher closes out all light from the burrows, so he will cover the bait if the runway is exposed too long. All the new mounds should be treated and all mounds leveled. In a day or two any new mounds should be given another treatment. Two treatments will usually kill all the gophers.

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