

Vole or Meadow Mouse (*Microtus pennsylvanicus*)



A heavysset, greyish/brown mouse-like animal with tiny ears, short tail and small, dark eyes.

Damage

Voles (meadow mice) in large number can seriously damage orchard trees, Christmas trees and other woody plants. In the winter, when other food is scarce, voles will gnaw on trees and shrubs causing severe damage by girdling trunks, stems and roots. They can burrow in the snow and may cause damage to trees as high as the snow accumulates.

When Are They Active

Most mouse damage occurs in winter but start looking for evidence of them in early autumn. Look for nests and runways in grass or other surface vegetation. The presence of chewed fruit and small feces, along with frequent sightings, may be indicators of a large meadow mouse population.

Susceptible Plants

Meadow mice prefer younger and thinner barked trees and shrubs but can cause severe damage to older trees with exposed roots or older fruit trees under snow or grass cover.

Prevention/Control Methods

Hawks, owls, fox, skunks, weasels, mink and snakes are beneficial predators that eat great numbers of meadow mice and their presence should be encouraged. Trapping and baiting may be necessary if natural predators are inadequate. Mid-October through mid-November, before there is snow cover, is the best time to attempt trapping. Keeping grass mowed and maintaining grass free areas around trees and shrubs can help eliminate mouse habitat. Hardware cloth or 1/4" wire mesh wrapped around the base of fruit or ornamental trees can protect the trunks from mouse damage. The mesh should be buried 2-3 inches below ground level and extend 18-20 inches above ground level.

Additional Information/Resources

- UW Extension Bulletin A2148 [Meadow Mouse Control](#)
- Dane County UW Extension Horticulture Hotline [608-224-3721](tel:608-224-3721) (M-F, 9 am-12 noon, April 15 – October 31) or horticulture@countyofdane.com

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