

THIS WAY TO ELIMINATE plague of moles ACTUALLY WORKS IN USE

By B. R. LEACH

EIGHT years ago, when we purchased our palatial 100 by 200 rural estate, we soon discovered that three-eighths of the entire mole population of the state of New Jersey were doing their level best to ruin our beautiful crab-grass lawn. Right there and then I commenced a fundamental investigation as regards the whys and wherefores of moles and conducted numerous experiments with the object of determining simple methods of annihilating them. Inasmuch as I captured 242 moles within a period of five weeks in the spring of 1921, it would appear only fair that the authorities give some consideration to my aspirations for the title of the champion mole-catcher of New Jersey and points south.

During these troublesome days I interviewed several of the neighbors with regard to this mole business. One farmer gave me the straight dope as follows:

Moles Eat Early

"Trying to catch moles with traps is all danged nonsense," said he. "I've tried every gol darned mole-trap ever made and there ain't one of them worth the strength it takes to throw it over a fence. I know from experience there's only one way to catch moles, and here it is: Get up along about daybreak, say about 3:45 a. m., and go out where the moles have their runway. Why get up so early? Because moles begin feeding at daybreak. They don't stay in bed half the morning.

"Now when you get out there to the mole-run, walk on about ten feet of the run so as to firm it down level with the surrounding turf. Now get a pitchfork and a bucket or a box or something comfortable, set down, and keep your eyes glued close to that part of the mole-run that you walked on. Don't let your eyes wander; these here moles are just as fast as greased lightning. Coincident with the moment when old Sol peeps over the eastern hills

and casts his first mellow rays o'er the melliferous Jersey landscape, you will see that portion of the mole-run you walked on begin to quiver. Mr. Mole is on the job. Jump up off the bucket with all the alacrity you possess, jump with both feet on the spot of soil that is quivering, stick the pitchfork into the soil and there is one less mole in the state of New Jersey. Simple and sure, eh what?"

Yeah, simple is the word, all but that 3:45 a. m. monkey business.

Having exhausted all the local store information as regards moles I wrote to Washington for a bulletin on moles. This bulletin was decidedly interesting. It told all about the personal habits of Mr. and Mrs. Mole, what they ate, etc., etc., and how to catch them with traps. Well, I followed the directions given in the bulletin with the minutest attention to detail but I didn't catch very many moles. Seemed as though they just played tag with those traps. Went under them with impunity and no apparent effort. Then I began to realize dimly that the author of this bulletin on moles didn't know as much about moles as I had been previously led to believe. In fact I am now certain that the son-of-a-gun never caught a mole in his life.

All jesting aside, the major portion of the country's population is decidedly sour with regard to what they consider the general inefficiency of mole-traps. As a matter of fact, the instructions furnished by the manufacturers of mole-traps, together with the consideration of their use in government bulletins and other publications, are decidedly sketchy and inadequate with the result that the average novice mole-catcher makes a few tries and gives up in disgust. From that time on he has no use for traps.

Traps, Used Right, Are O. K.

As a matter of fact, mole-traps are very efficient instruments provided the trapper

knows his stuff, and it may not be amiss at this time to detail the few pointers which I have found by experience to be very important in using these implements. A few freehand sketches are herewith ap-

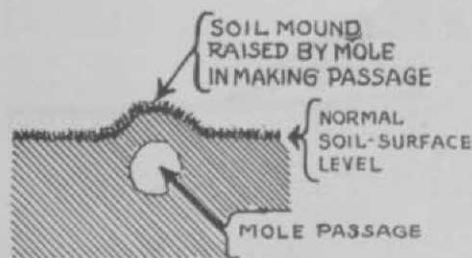


FIG. 1

ended in order to demonstrate clearly the several points involved.

Fig. 1 shows a cross section of a mole-run. The mole makes this run by pushing his sharp nose along just under the surface of the soil, loosening the soil in his path by means of his spoon-like front feet and lifting the soil by means of his back so that, when completed, he had a round tunnel just a little larger than his body just below the surface of the soil. The passage or trail of this underground tunnel is clearly defined to the observer by the raised soil which runs in an irregular line over the garden or turf. If you stick your finger down through this mound and wiggle it parallel with the soil surface, you can feel the well-defined tunnel.

Having this general situation clearly in mind, the first step in setting a mole-trap properly consists in determining the exact location of the underground tunnel by sticking the finger into the soil at a given

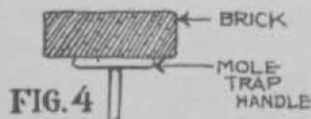


FIG. 4

point in the center of the mound and repeating the operation at a distance of 8 inches along the run. By exploring with the finger you can tell exactly the position of the underground tunnel between the two points 8 inches apart.

Now place the sole of your shoe squarely across the raised mound at the point equidistant between the two holes made with the finger and press the mound down firmly. Do not obliterate the two holes be-

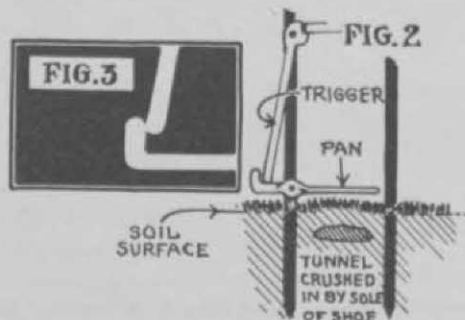
cause these are your guide in the next step of placing the trap in position.

Take the trap (do not set the trigger as yet) and push the two posts of the trap into the ground, one on each side of the line drawn between the two finger holes, until the pan of the trap touches the soil surface. This operation will also push the tines of the trap into the soil. Now hold the trap in position, grasp the handle and work it up and down a few times so that the tines make a passage for themselves in the soil.

Be Careful Setting Trigger

The next step consists in holding the trap in position and pulling all the way up on the handle so that the trigger and the shoulder on the end of the pan engage.

So far so good, and as a matter of fact the average mole-trapper considers the job of setting the trap entirely completed when he has done this much. Theoretically, the mole coming along his run comes to the point where you have pressed in



the tunnel with the sole of the shoe. He begins to dig in order to repair the broken tunnel whereupon he lifts the soil under the pan thereby lifting the pan and causing it to release the trigger which causes the tines to come down through the soil and pierce his body.

As a matter of fact this rarely happens: In the first place, these pans and triggers have a tendency to rust and offer considerable resistance to the release of the trigger; often the mole will lift the entire trap without releasing the trigger.

To avoid this condition, two things are necessary. First, work the pan and trigger up and down on their bearings until all stiffness and rust are removed. In rainy weather it is necessary to do this at least every other day. Secondly, after the trap has been set and everything is in position, take some light tool such as a

pair of pliers, or the handle of a screw driver and gently tap the shoulder of the pan, Fig. 2, until it takes the position shown in Fig. 3.

You will note that the shoulder of the pan is now just barely holding the trigger in place; in fact if you sneeze real hard, the pan will release the trigger. This is what is known as a hair-trigger set and is very important in mole-catching. The slightest upheaval of the soil under the pan when set with this fine adjustment will cause the release of the trigger and the downward penetration of the tines. In other words the mole is monkeying with dynamite. More moles go under traps without being caught due to the too coarse adjustment of the trigger and pan-shoulder than for any other reason except one which I will now explain in detail.

Traps Kick Out

Let us say that you have the trap set according to the directions above. A mole comes along, lifts the soil under the pan and the trap springs releasing the pointed tines. According to all the laws of the prophets, the tines should snap down into the soil and pinion Mr. Mole right where he stands. But as a matter of fact in about nine cases out of ten the mole escapes. Why? Because the motive power which drives these tines into the soil consists of a heavy spring. When this spring uncoils, it kicks so hard that the trap rebounds and is lifted partly or completely out of the ground and the tines at best only penetrate the soil for an inch or so, not deep enough to pin the mole.

In other words the manufacturers have failed to make provision for the trap holding itself in the ground when the spring uncoils. Fortunately there is a very simple way of overcoming this tendency of the

trap to push out of the soil when it goes off. The secret consists in placing a common brick on top of the handle of the trap. When the trap goes off, the brick holds the trap down until the tines have penetrated their full length and then calmly fall off. A mole-trap without the accompanying brick perched athwart its handle is just about as useless an instrument as a rake without teeth.

So, in the last analysis, the secret of success in trapping moles are three in number. First, set the trap squarely over the tunnel; second, set the pan-shoulder and trigger on a hair-trigger edge; and third, put a brick on the handle of the trap to hold it down when it springs.

Change Trap Location

Here's a few more pointers with regards to mole-trapping. There is usually more than one mole in a run; I have caught as high as sixteen, one or two each day until I had cleaned them out. When you reset the trap in the same place day after day, the moles get wise and refuse to dig under the trap. I believe this is due to the blood of the previous victims which warns them that all is not normal at that particular spot. At any rate, the proper thing to do is to move the trap a few feet along the run in the direction from which the moles are coming and reset the trap. Secondly, where you have a long, well defined mole-run, it is always good business to use more than one trap. String a half dozen traps at intervals along the run so that by the law of averages you are bound to clean them up in the minimum length of time.

In conclusion would advise that I have never enjoyed any measure of success in trying to kill or repel moles by filling the runs with cyanide, red pepper, arsenic, etc.



Louisville (Ky.) board of park commissioners has centralized its repair work in a fine shop, part of which is shown herewith. The focus of repair work saved a lot of money