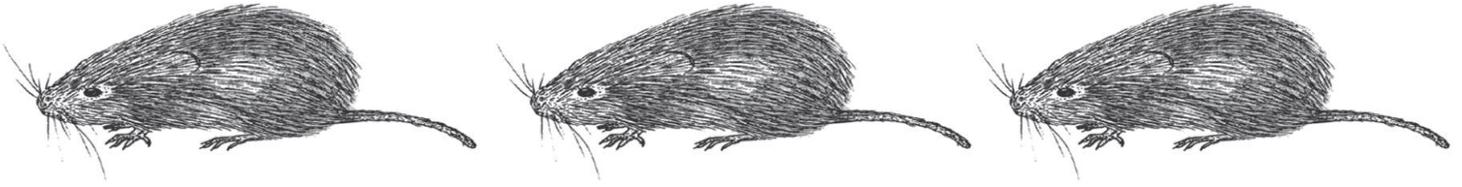


# Attack of the Voles!



The vole population has exploded over these past couple of winters in Valley County and elsewhere. We have had numerous reports countywide of the devastation that these little rodents have caused this past winter and spring. I have seen the damage this past week on acres of lawn destroyed by these varmints.

Voles can have anywhere from 5 to 10 litters a year. The litters will average 5 to 10 per litter. The gestation time for a new litter is three weeks. One vole can produce as many as 100 babies in one year. Yikes!

In the past, voles would typically live in the fields and areas of little traffic during the summer and would move into our yards under the cover of snow during the winter causing their havoc. Some would stay in your yards through the season creating mounds and destroying your plants. Usually, spring and summer activity, lawn mowing, and noises would drive them back into the fields. This may not be the case this year.

We have seen an explosion of voles in yards and lawns that we have not seen to this extent in the past. There are several reasons for this. There was a report on the news channel stating that the explosion of the voles was due partly to a disease in the fox population in the winter of 2015. There was an outbreak among the foxes where they contracted mange and many died. Foxes are a natural predator of voles and have been able to keep their populations in check. With the imbalance in the fox population, the vole population has exploded.

Also, this past winter, we received a heavy snowfall prior to the ground freezing which insulated the ground from a hard freeze. This allowed the voles to move into the yards and lawns and dig their tunnels and embed themselves in your yards. These two events that have occurred have resulted in the vole infestations that we are seeing in Valley County and elsewhere.

There are remedies available to repair the damage that they have caused, but more importantly, getting them out of your yard and keeping them out.

## **Repairing the damage:**

1. Rake out all of the dead grass with a stiff rake or thatch your yard using a Thatcher and dispose of the grass.
2. Rake out any dirt mounds or trails. This will allow you to see if there is any new activity.
3. Reseed the damaged areas and cover with straw, a light covering of topsoil, compost, or Straw Net to protect the new seed and sprouted seed.
4. Water, and keep moist until seed is sprouted and rooted in.

### **Vacating the voles from your yard or planting areas:**

1. Apply Biosol organic fertilizer using a spreader to your yard or planting areas. We have found this to be an effective repellent and Biosol also doubles as an organic fertilizer. Applying a tablespoon of Biosol down the vole holes has effectively driven voles out of perennial gardens.
2. Apply MoleMax, an organic vole repellent that contains castor seed oil.
3. Apply MoleTox II down the vole holes. This is a poison, so I would not recommend using this if you have pets or wildlife in the area. A good alternative would be to use the Biosol placed down the holes.
4. Use Revenge Rodent Smoke Bombs by lighting the fuse and installing down their active holes. Lightly wad a piece of newspaper and stuff it in the hole. The wad of newspaper does double duty. First, it keeps the poisonous smoke in the tunnels and secondly, if the vole panics and tries to vacate its hole, it will hit the newspaper which will make noise and it will scare the vole back down its hole into the poisonous gas filled tunnels.
5. Set out Vole bait stations. I would not recommend this if you have pets or wildlife in the area. The voles that eat the poison and die outside of their holes can be eaten by animals which will be ingesting the poison.
6. Plant castor bean plants or seeds in gardens, perennial beds, or property boundaries. These annual plants are effective in acting as a repellent for voles. The downside about castor bean plants is they are tender to frost and the seeds they produce are toxic if ingested. If pets or children are around these plants, use caution.
7. Install solar or battery-powered sonic stakes in your yard. We have had mixed reviews on these products. Some customers stated they didn't work for them and others swear by them.
8. Install wind stakes that create vibrations in the ground. These have been effective in driving voles out of areas.
9. If you have a serious infestation, we provide a service using a Rodenator. This piece of equipment fills the tunnels up with a propane and oxygen mixture that is ignited and blows up the tunnels. By destroying the tunnels, you are removing their living areas and runways preventing future generations from moving in.
10. Cats and some dogs are great vole hunters. Just make sure that you put them on a regular worming regiment.
11. I have successfully killed voles using mousetraps and rat traps with peanut butter. You have to tie a string or wire to the traps and stake them to keep from losing them. If you place the traps at the top of their holes, you may be able to kill

some this way. I would not recommend this if you have cats and dogs in the area though, as they may trip the traps and get their noses or paws caught.

12. For future vole prevention, I recommend applying Biosol to your yard and planting areas prior to the snowfall for the upcoming winter season. We have found this to be 80 to 100% effective in preventing vole damage. Any damage that may occur is less serious as they only eat the top of the grass and not the roots allowing the grass to recover more quickly. Check with us for the winter prevention Vole treatment program.

You can use one or a combination of the above options. We have used them all and each of them has been effective in killing or driving out these pests. Biosol is our favorite preventative coupled with the MoleMax.

Hopefully with these tips, you will be able to eradicate the voles from your yards. We carry all of these products that are mentioned above, with the exception of peanut butter. You can get that at D9. We have a Thatcher for rent and we provide the Rodenator service. We also provide vole clean up and reseedling services should you need them.

Here's to a voleless yard from your Vole Eradication Specialists!



Alpha Nursery & Garden Center  
12 Alpha Lane  
Cascade, ID 83611  
(208) 382-5742

Hours: 10AM to 5PM Daily  
alphanursery@hotmail.com  
[www.alpha-nursery.com](http://www.alpha-nursery.com)