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Stop Pocket Gophers!

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IF YOU happen to be one of the Iowa farmers who has just broken a sickle on your mower by running into a pocket gopher mound, perhaps you would like to know some simple way of getting rid of these pests.

How can you get rid of the pocket gophers easily? Poison them. It’s really not hard to do, and it is very effective if done properly. It is a much more efficient way to get rid of these pests than trapping, although where a bounty is paid, a boy can keep himself in pocket money trapping gophers. He will soon become very skillful at the job, but he will never actually eradicate all the gophers in any one field.

Poisoning is a rapid, easy way to kill pocket gophers. If the poison and bait are mixed and applied properly, one baiting will kill from 75 to 90 percent of the gophers — and another dose of poisoned bait will get the rest of them.

Bait can be made from Irish potatoes, carrots, turnips, parsnips, rutabagas or sweet potatoes. Cut the vegetable into pieces 1 1/2 inches long and 1/4 inch square. While the cut pieces are fresh, place them in a paper sack and sprinkle them with 1/16 ounce of powdered strychnine per quart (by measure) of cut bait.

While strychnine is very poisonous to all animals, it makes an excellent pocket gopher poison if mixed and properly applied with the bait. If the mixing vessels and hands are washed as soon as the job is done, there is no danger to pets or children because the bait is buried.

Pocket gophers can be poisoned almost any time, but the most efficient job can be done in April, May and October when vegetation is short and mounds are easy to see.

Take the poisoned baits and a sharpened broomstick out to the infested field. Find a pocket gopher mound which looks fresh, and examine it. As seen from above, the mound will be round in outline on one side, flat on the other. The flat side of the mound indicates the position of the main runway where you want to put the poison. The main runway is usually 8 to 12 inches away from the mound, so use the sharpened broomstick as a probe to locate the runway where you want to put the poison. When it is found, drop two or three pieces of poisoned bait into the probe hole, and then close the hole with the heel to exclude light. The pocket gopher, in his travels along the runway, will find and eat the bait — and die.

Poison at two mounds in each system and remember there is only one pocket gopher per system. When the field has been poisoned completely, take a harrow and drag down the mounds. There are two reasons for this: First, the mounds are hard on mowers and are easy to drag down when fresh; second, you can’t expect to kill all of the gophers with one baiting.

Any fresh mounds that appear in 24 to 48 hours are thrown up by gophers that missed the bait. Re-poison those mounds and drag them down. Usually two poisonings will clean up a field.

Since pocket gophers move from farm to farm in the spring and fall, baited fields usually become re-infested from unbaited fields nearby. But don’t use this fact as an excuse to delay poisoning.

Yearly baiting will pay big dividends in increased yields of alfalfa, fewer broken sickles and less soil erosion. Pocket gopher control is an ideal community project. If all farmers in a community will poison their own gopher-infested fields thoroughly the same season, they can all rest for sev-
One of the common damages of pocket gophers is to cut off the roots of young trees for storage in their winter food supply. These are young cherry trees.

Pocket gophers in Iowa do a great deal of damage to crops and soils by their undercover and underground work. They feed on the roots of many crops, but seem to prefer legumes like alfalfa and the clovers.

One pocket gopher may cut off and store more than a bushel of roots during the summer. In addition, pocket gophers sometimes cut off the roots of young trees during the fall and winter, and, if they are allowed to work unmolested in the garden, they can destroy whole rows of many root crops.

Pocket gophers are very industrious, and one gopher may dig out as much as a mile of runway during a season. These runways, particularly on slopes, may be the cause of serious erosion later.

The mounds thrown up in alfalfa and clover fields are the cause of many broken sickles every year. This year, with the machinery shortage, we can't afford to have broken parts and we can't afford the loss of time these broken parts cause.

Here is indicated the correct place in the runway of a pocket gopher to place the poisoned vegetable bait.

Bees in the War

Uncle Sam is asking the beekeepers to "ask" their bees to help win the war. Because of the rationing of sugar, honey has gained a new spotlight in the food picture. In addition, the government wants all of the beeswax that can be obtained. This is being used for coating machinery that goes into climates so warm that oil and grease won't stay on the machinery. The wax is used, too, for dental work in the services and for making models of machinery in war production plants.

Bees have another important contribution to make besides the honey and wax which they furnish — they are a great aid to the pollination of fruit and field crops such as the clovers and alfalfa. This better pollination increases the crop of seed of the legumes and the fruit production of orchards.

The Iowa Agricultural Experiment Station, in cooperation with beekeepers and other experiment stations, has made a gigantic contribution to successful beekeeping through the development of strains of bees that are resistant to American foulbrood, the worst of the bee diseases. Use of queens of these disease-resistant strains will reduce the loss of bees and by eliminating bee losses will help bring about the much needed increased production of legume seed and fruit.

Queens of the disease-resistant stock are now available commercially. The resistant strain was developed by the Iowa Station and the distribution of the queens is being done through the Iowa Beekeepers' Association. About 15,000 queens were distributed this year.