

MOLES & VOLES

In Germany, moles are protected by law (§44 Federal Nature Conservation Law). **It is forbidden to capture or kill moles without Host Nation Nature Protection Agency approval and a proper permit.** It is important to identify the difference between moles and their close relative, the vole.



European mole
Credit: Michael David Hill

European mole or “Maulwurf”

(*Talpa euroaea*)

The European mole is only mole species that occurs in Germany. Moles are small (18 cm or 7 in long), ground-burrowing mammals with dark, velvety fur. They create and live in a series of underground tunnels, and the excess dirt is removed in small mounds above ground (see *below*). Since they spend most of their time underground, their eyesight is poor and their eyes are nearly non-existent. Due to their subterranean habitat, they have developed the acute ability to smell, hear and touch.

Contrary to popular belief, moles do not eat plant roots. They use their muscular forelimbs and shovel-like, clawed front feet to burrow for food, including insects, grubs, snails and worms. Because they eat a lot of insect larvae, in some cases, they may be beneficial by removing insects that would otherwise harm plants or crops. In addition, their digging nature inherently loosens the soil, thus aerating the soil for better drainage in lawns or gardens.

Voles or “Wühlmaus”

(*Arvicola spp.*)

Both moles and voles are in the rodent family; however, voles eat vegetation and plant roots, whereas the mole will not. In appearances, voles look more similar to mice in that they have small ears, open eyes and small paws compared to the mole.



Vole spp.
Credit: Martin Fowler



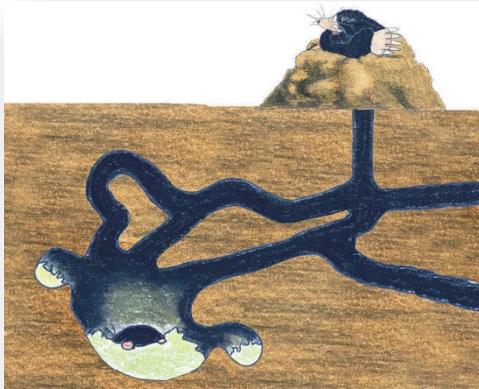
For more information, please contact USAG Bavaria, Directorate of Public Works (DPW)
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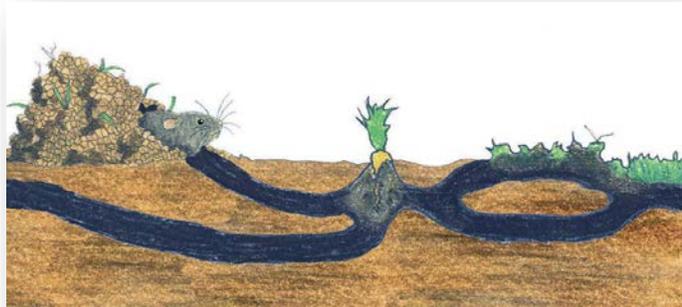


To distinguish between mole and vole mounds, look at the shape and contents of the mound – a mole mound will be round and rocky with a hole in the center of the mound. In contrast, a vole mound will have vegetation mixed in an oval-shaped mound and a hole at the side of the mound (*see below*).



Mole Mound and Tunnel System

Credit: Bettina Schenk, Mein-Schoener-Garten



Vole Mound and Tunnel System

Credit: Bettina Schenk, Mein-Schoener-Garten

Unlike moles, voles may be legally expelled from their homes. Before taking any action, you must properly identify the animal as a vole or a mole. If both species are present, actions taken against voles can negatively affect moles. All questions and concerns regarding mound identification and possible actions can be directed to the USAG Bavaria DPW Environmental Division.



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