

CONNIE'S NOTES: MOLES AND VOLES IN THE VINEYARD

I am no expert in wildlife control, but I spoke with the Extension Specialist for wildlife at NCSU, Dr. Chris DePerno, and the Extension Horticulture Agent in Duplin County, Mr. Whit Jones, about controlling moles in the vineyard and here are some tips they gave:

- Make sure they're actually moles. I know it seems silly, but I have been in grower's fields that didn't know what they had. Oftentimes the problem is actually voles, which require different management methods (see <http://www.extension.org/faq/14046> for tips on how to tell the difference between mole and vole damage).
- You need a permit to trap moles or voles. Or contact a Wildlife Damage Control Agent to handle the problem for you. (They are certified by the NCWRC and NCSU and can be found by visiting http://www.ncwildlife.org/fs_index_06_coexist.htm/.)
- Moles are actually quite beneficial in the vineyard as they aerate the soil - though I understand why you wouldn't want them in your yard. Also they have a low reproductive rate. Voles, on the other hand, do damage plants.
- Moles eat insects, grubs and worms – they don't do much damage to the vines themselves. So the key to mole control is to eliminate their food source, then they'll go visit your neighbors instead. There are many available options to treat for grubs, but if you know you have a lot of earthworms you can sprinkle Sevin in your yard, which will control the grubs and the earthworms. If you do choose to use a pesticide to control the food source be sure to follow the product label – it's the law. Keep in mind, all pesticides should be used judiciously and with due caution - all pesticides carry some risk to the handler and/or the environment, even when used as directed, and should especially be kept away from children and pets.
- Moles prefer loose, moist soil, so compacting the soil and reducing soil moisture are two ways to make your site less mole-friendly. In the vineyard setting, however, compacting the soil is not recommended as it may damage or impede the shallow muscadine roots.
- Moles are blind, so if you really want to keep them out, you can bury aluminum flashing around the plants. They'll hit it and turn around. The aluminum flashing may need to be buried 12-18 inches deep.
- If you have voles, there are chemical options (any warfarin product, such as Kaput, should work), but they require a permit.
- Another thing you can do to manage voles is to encourage natural predators like snakes, foxes, coyotes, hawks, owls, etc.

Notes taken by Connie Fisk, Extension Associate for Muscadine Grapes at NC State University, January 3 and 8, 2008.

To learn more about moles, voles, and management options, visit:

Moles: <http://www.ces.ncsu.edu/nreos/wild/wildlife/animals/mammals/moles.htm>
http://icwdm.org/handbook/allPDF/MAM_D51.PDF

Voles: <http://www.ces.ncsu.edu/nreos/wild/wildlife/animals/mammals/voles.htm>
http://icwdm.org/handbook/allPDF/RO_B177.PDF

Recommendations for the use of chemicals are included in this publication as a convenience to the reader. The use of brand names and any mention or listing of commercial products or services in this publication does not imply endorsement by the North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service nor discrimination against similar products or services not mentioned. Individuals who use chemicals are responsible for ensuring that the intended use complies with current regulations and conforms to the product label. Be sure to obtain current information about usage and examine a current product label before applying any chemical. For assistance, contact an agent of the North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service in your county.