

Providing Leadership in Environmental Entomology

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MOLE CRICKET MANAGEMENT FOR THE HOME LAWN

Successful mole cricket management requires patience and regular monitoring of the situation. It is not a one-time, one-insecticide application. Control is dependent upon an annual, well-timed plan. Timing of controls and cultural practices are as important as the choice of insecticides.



Tawny (top) and southern mole cricket (bottom).

The major effort should be directed toward young nymphs. These treatments should be applied in June, July, and early August while the nymphs are most sensitive to treatments.

Problem areas should be mapped in the spring when adults are present. These are the areas where most nymphs will be found in late June and July. These areas should be sampled carefully with a detergent flush beginning in late June. At this time, little damage is evident, but young nymphs will begin to show up following a soap flush. Mix 2 tablespoons of liquid detergent in 1 gallon of water. Pour over a 2 to 3 square feet area where damage was present in the spring. Any mole crickets present will surface in a few minutes. This should be done early in the morning or late in the afternoon. Treat if 2 to 4 mole crickets surface within three minutes.

Mole crickets can be identified by the number and spacing of the tibial dactyls (digging claws) on the front legs and by the color and pattern on the pronotum

(back area behind the head). These are illustrated below. The native northern mole cricket has four distinct claws/toes (dactyls) on the front leg. Tawny and southern mole crickets have two distinct claws/toes (dactyls) on the front leg. The tawny mole cricket has a tight "V" spacing between the claws (dactyls) while the southern mole cricket has an open "U" spacing between the claws (dactyls). Since tawny mole crickets feed on the grass, they are capable of producing much more damage than the native and southern mole crickets, which only tunnel.



Applying a detergent solution to sample for mole crickets.

The southern mole cricket in South Carolina has a pronotal pattern with four distinct, white dots against a darker brown background color. The tawny mole cricket has a distinct medium brown pattern against a lighter brown to tan background color. We do not have the mottled southern or the short-winged mole cricket in South Carolina.



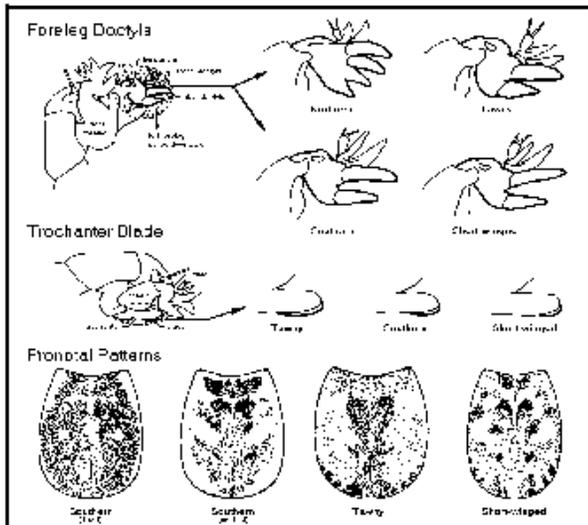
Heavy mole cricket damage. Note the tunnels and uprooted grass seedlings.

Several insecticides are available for control of mole crickets. It is essential to read the label carefully to be certain you apply products at the correct rate and at the correct time of year.

For specific information contact your local County Extension Agent.

For other publications in our Entomology Insect Information Series visit our web site at <http://www.clemson.edu/esps>.

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Identifying characteristics of mole crickets.

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