

Pocket Gophers: Biology and Damage Management

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Gopher Biology

- Live in the soil, spending a small amount of time above ground to feed, find new territory, or get around obstacles
- 3 species in Arizona
- 5-7 inches long (without tail)
- Large head
- Long, sharp, chisel-like teeth
- Powerful front legs with long claws



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Gopher Biology (cont.)

- Short tail with tactile hairs
- Pouches on both sides of head to hold food and soil
- Have one or two litters per year (usually 3-4 per litter)
- Soon after weaning, the young leave the nest and disperse above ground
- Adults live solitarily (except when mating)



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Feeding

- Plant Feeders

- Roots encountered underground
- Surface feeding a body length or so away from burrow openings
- Pulling plants into burrow from below



- Preferred Foods Include:

alfalfa, grasses, root crops, tap rooted weeds, shrub roots, tree roots, garden crops

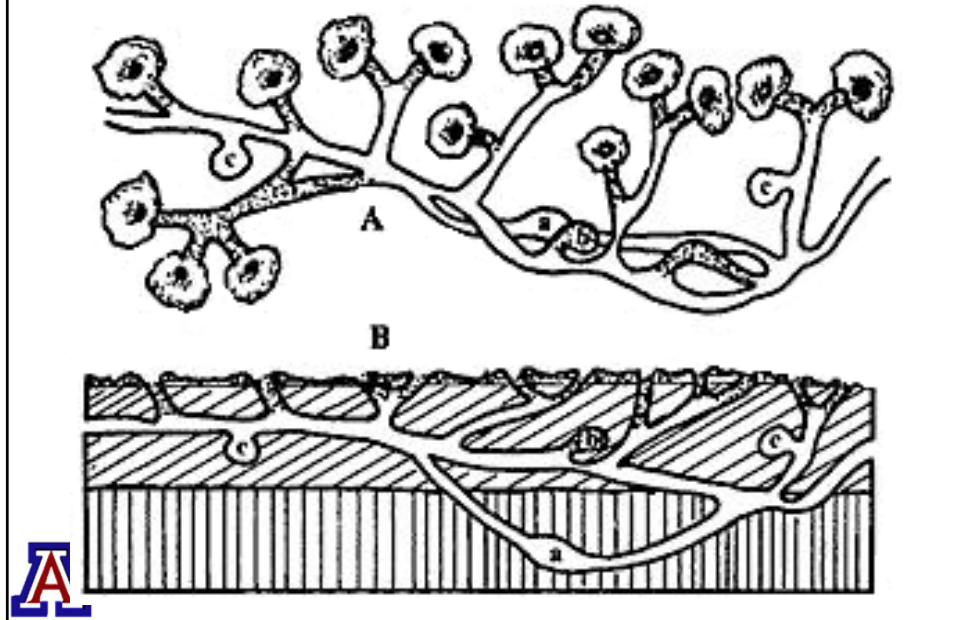


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Gopher Burrows



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Control Methods

- Trapping – excellent
- Exclusion – good where applicable
- Biocontrol – cats, dogs, snakes
- Fumigants – marginal
- Toxicants – not recommended for residential areas, secondary poisoning
- Flooding – rarely effective for residential areas
- Cultural Controls – destroy burrows, remove food, plant selection
- Repellents - ineffective

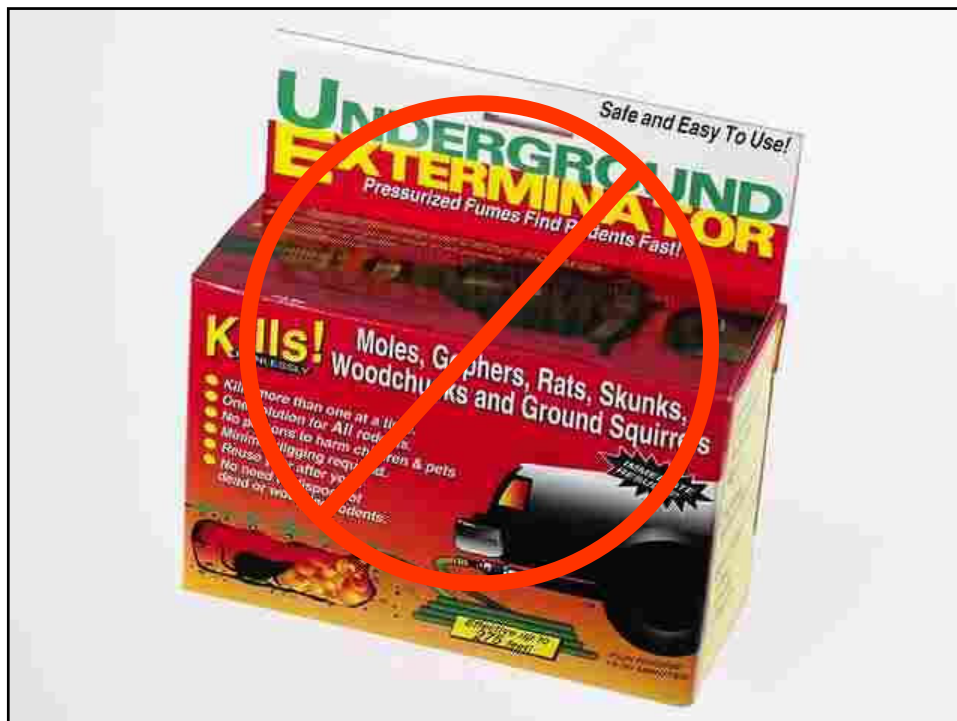


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Fumigants



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Sonic Devices Are Not Effective



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Trapping

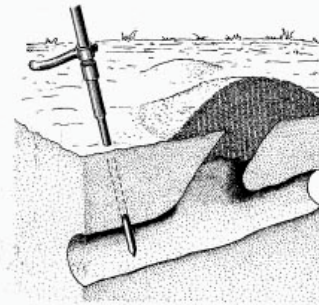
- Lethal traps are the only effective method



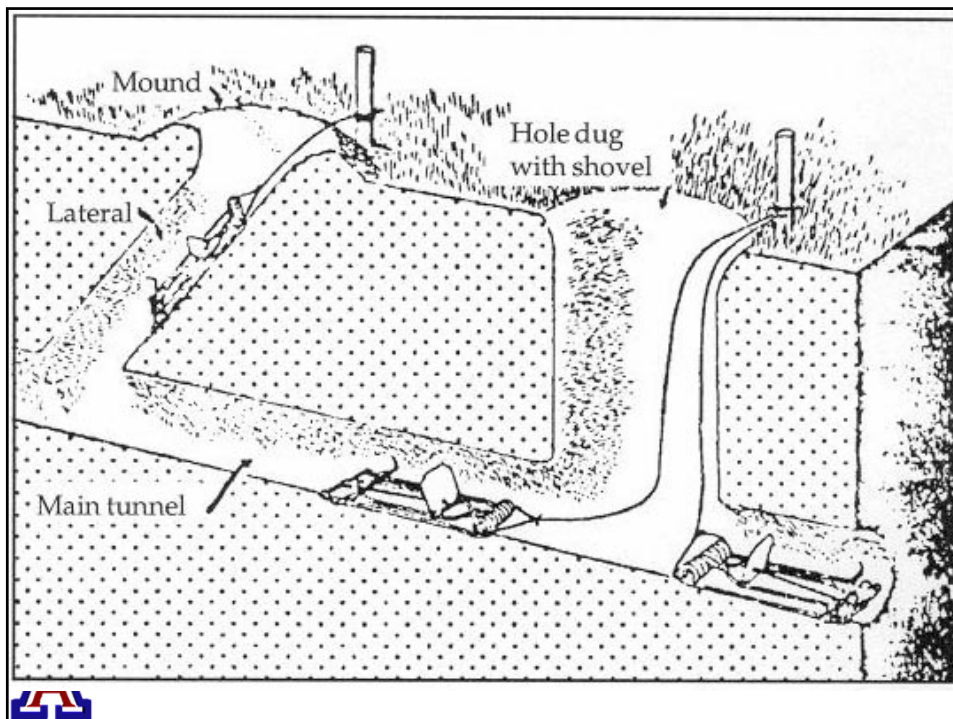
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How To Set A Trap

- Two traps wired to a stake
- Locate main tunnel using probe
- Set one trap in each direction
- Cover the hole
- Obliterate fresh mounds
- Check the following day
- Reset as needed



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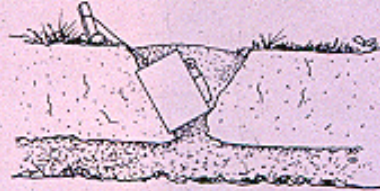
Box Traps



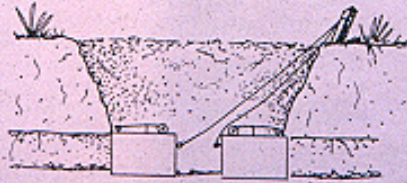
1. Dig out lateral runway to point "A" and clear away soil so trap can be placed as shown below.



2. Set trap in lateral if possible.



3. If unable to set trap in lateral set two traps in-main runway.



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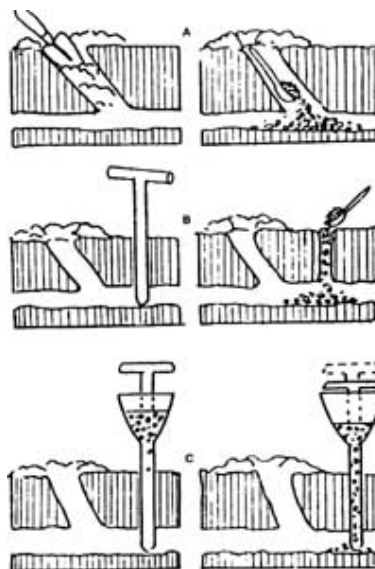
Exclusion



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Toxicants

- Strychnine on grain
- Other products too
- Can be dangerous to non-target organisms if not used correctly



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Cultural Controls

- Weed Control
- Flooding only works when:
 - The entire field is flooded
 - Soils are porous
 - Gophers are below the high water mark



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Biocontrol

- Dogs/Cats
- Coyotes
- Owls
- Snakes

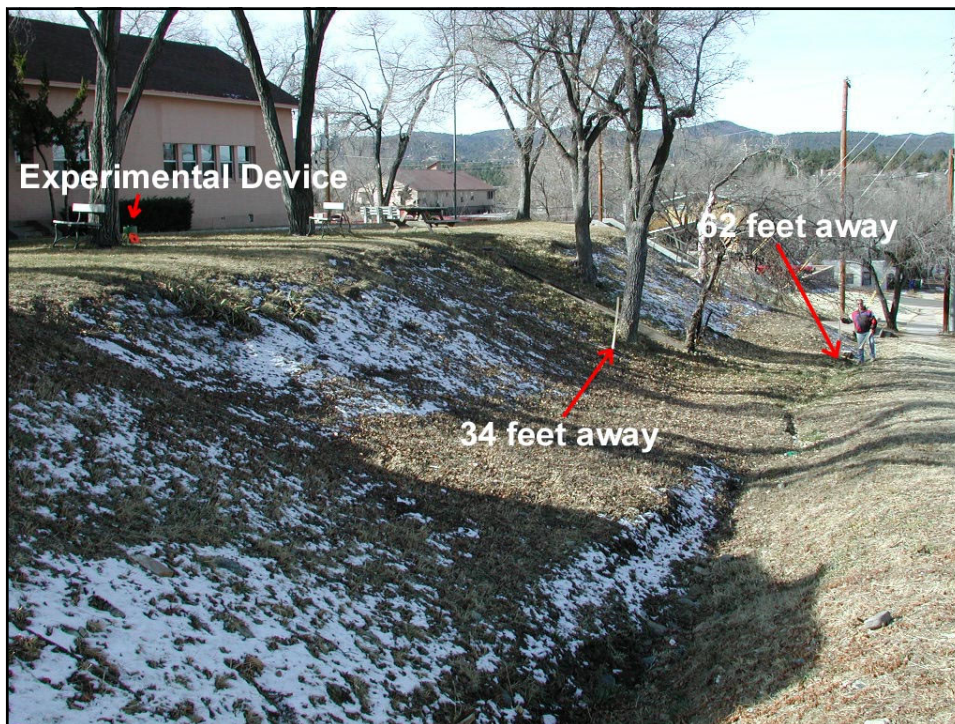


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Experimental Device



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Repellents are Ineffective

- Gopher Purge (*Euphorbia lathyris*)
- Human Hair
- Juicy Fruit Gum
- Irish Spring Soap
- Chocolate Ex-Lax
- ???



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