

PEST AND DISEASE MANAGEMENT

Vertebrate Pests

Some of the most common vertebrate pests are the California Ground Squirrel, Pocket Gopher, Roof Rat, and Vole (Meadow Mouse).

California Ground Squirrel

The California ground squirrel is one of the most troublesome pests to homeowners and gardeners. Ground squirrels damage many food-bearing and ornamental plants. Particularly vulnerable are grains and nut and fruit trees such as almond, apple, apricot, orange, peach, pistachio, prune, and walnut.



California Ground Squirrel



California Ground Squirrel burrows

Pocket Gopher

Pocket gophers are burrowing rodents that get their name from the fur-lined external cheek pouches, or pockets, which they use for carrying food and nesting materials. They are well equipped for a digging, tunneling lifestyle with powerfully built forequarters, large-clawed front paws, fine short fur that doesn't cake in wet soils, small eyes and small external ears, and highly sensitive facial whiskers to assist movements in the dark. Pocket gophers often invade yards and gardens and feed on many garden crops, ornamental plants, vines, shrubs, and trees. A single gopher moving down a garden row can inflict considerable damage in a very short time. Gophers also gnaw and damage plastic water lines and lawn sprinkler systems.



Pocket Gopher



Characteristic crescent-shaped mound and plugged burrow opening of a pocket gopher

Roof Rat

Roof Rats are some of the most troublesome and damaging rodents in the United States. They consume and contaminate food, damage structures and property, and transmit parasites and diseases to other animals and humans. They also damage garden crops and ornamental plantings.



Roof Rat



Comparison of droppings, from left to right are house mouse, roof rat, and Norway rat.

Voles (Meadow Mouse)

Voles do not commonly invade homes, and should not be confused with the house mouse. Voles cause damage by feeding on a wide range of garden plants including artichoke, beet, Brussels sprouts, cabbage, carrot, cauliflower, celery, lettuce, turnip, sweet potato, spinach, and tomato. Turf and other landscape plantings such as lilies and dichondra may be damaged. Voles will gnaw the bark of fruit trees including almond, apple, avocado, cherry, citrus, and olive.



Vole



Examples of vole droppings