

# ENTOMOLOGICAL NEWS



KANSAS DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE—PLANT PROTECTION AND WEED CONTROL

## MOLE CRICKETS



Mole crickets can be serious pests of turf grass, vegetable plants, sod farms, home lawns and golf courses. What makes the mole cricket such a pest? Mole crickets dig tunnels throughout the soil using specialized front legs for digging,

As the crickets burrow they sever plant roots and cause the ground to bulge upwards. The mole cricket most likely encountered in Kansas would be the northern mole cricket *Neocurtilla hexadactyla* and is not generally a pest.

The southern mole cricket *Neoscapteriscus borellii* has been

identified in Cherokee Co., Oklahoma, but it is not believed to be established there.

The southern and southeastern states are home to 3 introduced species of mole crickets which cause considerable damage to turf, these include the shortwinged mole cricket

(*Neoscapteriscus abbreviatus*), the Southern mole cricket *Neoscapteriscus borellii* and the tawny mole cricket *Neoscapteriscus vicinus*.

Mole crickets lay eggs in chambers adjacent to the main tunnels usually 5-30 cm below the surface. The egg stage last 10 to 40 days. The nymphs on hatching burrow near the soil surface but dig deeper if the soil is dry or the weather becomes cooler.

Southeastern Kansas, Missouri, Oklahoma and Arkansas are home to the prairie mole cricket thought to be extinct in 1984, but isolated populations were

detected in the early 1990's. The prairie mole cricket is found mostly in tall grass prairie. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service proposed the prairie mole cricket for threatened Prairie Mole Crickets status in 1990. Subsequent distributional studies lead to the conclusion that the species was not entirely dependent of undisturbed native prairie, as originally thought, and the nomination for threatened status was withdrawn in 1992.

**Historic data for prairie mole cricket is from:**

**<https://entomology.uark.edu/outreach/arthropod-museum/arthropod-museum-bibliography.php>**



Mole cricket damage to crops