Gopher Identification Guide

Learn What Gophers Look Like, What They Eat, Etc.

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OVERVIEW

What Is a Gopher?



Gophers are burrowing rodents that can damage plants in your yard. They create mounds which can be confused with moles and mole hills but there are many differences between gophers and moles, including their appearance, tunneling habits, and diet.

Appearance

While you will rarely see gophers, also known as pocket gophers, it's still important to know what they look like so you can better identify and treat your lawn pest problem.

Gophers:

- Have fur-lined pouches on outside of cheeks that they use to transport and store food or materials for nests, where they get their "pocket" name from
- Range in size from about 6 to 14 inches long and can weigh up to a pound
- Are dark brown to black in color, with light colored fur on front of body, with white paws and white tails
- Have small eyes and ears
- Have large claws on front paws
- Have a flat head and stocky body

What Do Gophers Eat?

Gophers only eat plants, which again makes them different than moles, which eat insects. Gophers spend the majority of their time underground and only emerge to quickly gather food (which they put into their cheek pockets) and bring it back to the tunnel system for storage.

Sometimes they'll drag entire plants into the tunnel, or feed above ground a very short distance away from the tunnel entrance.

Gopher Habitat



Most gopher species will spend the majority of their lives underground, which makes it difficult to detect their presence unless there is visible damage and mounds.

A gopher mound is not round, but shaped as a fan or a kidney bean. They're about 1 to 2 feet in diameter and can be up to a foot high. The mounds are not connected by surface tunnels, like mole hills are, but gopher hills are generally built in a line.