

## **Mole crickets best controlled June through July**

Many people panic and treat their lawns with all sorts of pesticides when they see mole crickets or their tunnels in spring. What they don't understand is the biology of this insect.

Insecticide treatments during the mating and egg laying activity in spring, when mostly adults are present, are not recommended because adults are not easily killed and the chances of reinfestation from subsequent flights and unhatched eggs are high.

Mole crickets spend the winter as adults in the soil. In late February and March, adults emerge and begin to mate. After mating, males die and females fly to a suitable area for egg laying. Mated females deposit eggs in tunnels. After depositing her eggs the female dies.

It's best to mark areas of mole cricket activity and target those areas for treatment in mid June through July after the eggs have all hatched and before the nymphs (immature mole crickets) are large enough to do much damage. But don't treat at all if there is no evidence of mole cricket activity - no eggs may have been laid or they may not have survived.

If you're not sure mole crickets are present, you can find out with a soap solution. Dissolve one ounce of liquid soap into two gallons of water and pour over an area approximately nine square feet – and count the number of mole crickets that emerge. It only takes several minutes for mole crickets to crawl to the surface after the soap treatment if they are present. Repeat the process around the yard where you suspect mole cricket problems. If you flush an average of more than five crickets per site, treat the lawn with an insecticide. Follow up with spot treatments if any crickets escape the first insecticide treatment.

Irrigate before you apply an insecticide if the soil is dry and treat as late in the afternoon as you can. For best results, apply baits near dusk. Don't water in baits but water in sprays and granules with a quarter-inch of irrigation soon after application unless the label advises otherwise.

There are a number of products on the market for mole crickets in home lawns. Look for insecticides that contain bifenthrin, cyfluthrin, lambda-cyhalothrin or fipronil. Before using any product for mole cricket control first identify the problem as mole cricket damage by using the soap flush technique. Then choose an insecticide that lists mole crickets on its label. Read the container carefully for use directions, application techniques, irrigation requirements and precautions.

For more information on how to grow a Florida lawn contact your local UF/IFAS Extension Office or visit <http://yourfloridalawn.ifas.ufl.edu>.

Larry Williams, UF/IFAS Extension Agent, Okaloosa County, April 15, 2009

