

GOPHER DESTRUCTION.

INTRODUCTION.

Among the worst enemies of the farmer on the prairies in the provinces of Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta are the various species of gopher. These ground squirrels make their homes in holes burrowed through the soft soil of the prairies and live on the herbage in the more or less near neighbourhood.

VARIETIES OF GOPHER.

Two types of gopher are commonly found on the Canadian prairies, the ordinary gopher (*Citellus Richardsoni*), and the mole or pocket gopher; while a third, the squirrel tail gopher (*Citellus Franklini*), frequents the more bushy country and does, as a rule, relatively small damage.

DAMAGE CAUSED BY GOPHERS.

These rodents are exceedingly difficult to keep in check, and they work each year immense damage to the crops of the farmers in these prairie provinces. Living in holes in the ground, mounds of earth from the digging of which dot the prairie wherever one goes, sleeping all the winter, and awaking in the spring to feed on the tender green young plants in the fields and gardens, they do an incalculable amount of damage every year, and thousands of acres, which would otherwise be highly productive, are rendered of small value because of their depredations every spring. The edges of fields, especially when situated near unused or range land, are often cleaned bare of young plants when they are just above the ground, and other parts of the fields are partially cleared. Not only this, but the working of the land and the gathering of the harvest are made more difficult by the presence of the mounds of earth thrown out when the gopher burrows are being dug.

As illustrating in some measure the damage wrought by the gopher, the following paragraph from the Experimental Station records at Scott, Sask., where open prairie comes up to the Station farm on two sides, will be of interest.

"During the summer of 1915 it was noted that gophers were at work along the edges of two fields on the Scott Station. One field was in oats, the other in barley. With a view to ascertaining the actual losses experienced from these animals, the parts of the fields attacked by them were harvested and threshed separately.

The following table will show the losses sustained:—

Loss caused by Gophers, Season 1915.

Crop.	Yield per acre on part of field not attacked by gophers.	Yield per acre on part of field attacked by gophers.	Loss per acre caused by gophers.
Oats.....	90 bush. 19 lb.	77 bush. 14 lb.	11 bush. 5 lb.
Barley.....	40 " 41 "	22 " 20 "	18 " 21 "