



The Mole

Scientific Name: *Talpa europaea* **Irish Name:** Caochán



The mole is a small mammal, with a long, cylindrical body, covered in a black velvety fur. Its snout is naked except for sensitive whiskers. Also sensitive are the hairs on the tip of its short, upright tail, giving the mole information about its surroundings as it rubs off the roof of the tunnel. It has very short limbs and the large front paws are broad and spade-like. These permanently face outwards and have five sharp claws on each. As the mole spends most of its time in the dark, its tiny eyes do not see well so it relies mostly on its great sense of smell and touch. Though it does have internal ears, there are no visible openings so as to prevent soil getting in.



The mole uses its large, spade-like front paws for digging.



Moles are known for making molehills in gardens and are considered a pest by some farmers and gardeners. The expression "making a mountain out of a mole hill" means making a big deal out of a small issue.



The collective noun for a group of moles is a **labour** of moles.

A male mole is known as a **boar**, a female is a **sow** and its young is a **pup**.

The mole is a solitary animal and lives alone. It is rarely seen above ground, spending most of its life underground in a series of permanent tunnels. These tunnels are not just for moving from one place to another, they also have different chambers with various purposes, such as kitchen, bedroom and birthing areas.

Moles have one litter each year, with about 2-7 young. They carry their young for 4 weeks and their young will leave their mother after 5 weeks.

What's for Dinner?

Moles usually make their tunnels in habitats where the earth is deep enough to tunnel, so it should come as no surprise that their main diet is earthworms. They even store some earthworms to eat later. Moles also like to eat the larvae of insects.



FACT FILE

Length: 14-18 cm

Weight: 250-550 g

Diet: Feeds mostly on earthworms but also eats insect larvae.

Habitat: Pastures, meadows, gardens,

Distribution: The European mole is very common in the UK and in Europe, except in southern countries. There are no moles in Ireland.