Park & Rec Personnel Reclaim Open Spaces, Improve Safety, by Eradicating Burrowing Rodents Using Non-Chemical Means

A non-poison, chemical free pest control method destroys burrowing rodents and their tunnels to make parks and sports fields safer for children, families, and pets

Those working to eradicate burrowing rodents in parks without poisons or other harmful chemicals, are finding success with a poison-free, non-chemical, pest control method that delivers a precision underground shockwave to the targeted animals while also collapsing their tunnel systems to prevent re-infestation.

For public parks, burrowing rodents such as gophers and ground squirrels are Public Enemy No. 1.

Far from being cute, cuddly creatures, these pests can quickly dig up and destroy plants, trees, flowers, and playing fields. Out of nowhere, unsightly mounds of earth, holes and shallow tunnels are just waiting for park goers, dog walkers, joggers or youth sports participants to step in them and trip, twist an ankle, or worse. Children and pets that reach into the holes can even be bitten, requiring preventive rabies shots. Equipment can also be damaged, including lawnmowers and golf carts.

"Ground squirrels will dig a deep 8-12" diameter hole overnight, right in the middle of a park or children's playing field that can be an ankle breaking hazard," says Tom Goldie, owner of Burrow BlastersUSA, a San Diego, Calif. area-based burrowing rodent extermination company that specializes in keeping public parks safe without traps or poison. "In areas taken over by ground squirrels or gophers, playing fields may even have to be restricted or shut down until the burrowing rodent problem is handled."

Jeff Benites, a Senior Park Maintenance Worker of Clark County Parks and Recreation who works at 182-acre

A truly effective, poison and pesticide-free method of eliminating burrowing rodents called the Rodenator.

Sunset Park in Las Vegas, Nevada, says the pocket-gopher problem there had spiraled out of control.

"Our landscaping was literally decorated with gopher holes," explains Benites. "Everywhere you looked there was a gopher-hole. It was to the point where kids would be playing little-league baseball and a gopher would pop up underneath the batter."

These pests can also create enormous amounts of damage. "They chew through irrigation wires and high-voltage wires, and cause a lot of other problems as well," says Benites. "They've cost us millions over the life of this 40-plus-year old park."

Use of Poisons/Traps in Parks

The challenge for park & rec personnel is that poisons – the most common solution to address the problem for the past hundred years – are becoming increasingly unusable in public parks due to environmental, regulatory and safety issues.

These poisons come in varying forms, the most common being baited food, which carries inherent risks even if applied properly.

"If a gopher or ground squirrel pushes a poison cube out of his hole and a lawnmower runs over it, that poison can be spread everywhere," cautions Goldie. "That's a risk where children play, families sit to watch soccer games, and families walk their dogs. The application of poisons can also pose a risk if it enters groundwater. To enhance public safety and prevent liability, park and rec maintenance personnel are increasingly seeking solutions to avoid poisons and traps in public areas."

Ironically, a major hazard comes about when the poison is effective—the dead rodent attracts other predators, who themselves will be poisoned.

According to Benites, this is clearly not desirable in an area such as a public park like Sunset Park that prides itself on a variety of wildlife. "We're a unique facility. We have around 182 acres, and we have coyote, quail, hawks, and all types of wildlife. We looked into bait pellets, but we didn't even bother trying them. Due to the problem of secondary poisoning, they were out of the question."

Poison can also take the form of gas. Over the years, a common gopher poison is Fumatoxin, placed underground. For the gas to be contained, the moisture content in the earth must be at a certain level and, if not, the gas escapes through cracks and not only does nothing to handle the gopher problem, it can be harmful to humans.

Fumatoxin contains aluminum phosphide, a dangerous Federal-Restricted-Use pesticide. Obviously, in a heavily-used area, poisonous gasses are a health hazard to be avoided.

As to the use of standard gopher traps, Benites says that Sunset Park used conventional traps for about 20 years, but could never catch up. In addition to trap's hit-or-miss success, they can be a hazard in a publicly-used facility and must be used with caution.

"We'd have to set them first thing in the morning and go and pull them before the end of the shift so there would be no unattended traps," explains Benites. "If we set them in a ball-field we'd have to completely lock up the field because of kids or someone pulling out the trap and getting injured. So for liability reasons we'd have to pull them before the end of the shift."

Non-Chemical Solution

Those working to eradicate burrowing rodents in parks without poisons or other harmful chemicals, are instead finding

To further increase operator productivity and comfort, a new R3 Pest Elimination System adds wired detonation up to 25 feet from the source, and 20% more power to the industry leading Rodenator line.

success with a poison-free, non-chemical, pest control method that delivers a precision underground shockwave to the targeted animals while also collapsing their tunnel systems to prevent re-infestation.

"The concept is unique and I've found it capable of a 92 to 96 percent first pass kill ratio on gophers, and nearly 100 percent on ground squirrels," says Goldie.

As delivered by the Rodenator Pest Elimination System, developed by Meyer Industries, a wand is inserted into a burrow hole, and a mixture of oxygen and propane gas is shot into the hole for sixty to ninety seconds, depending on the type of animal. Then another button on the wand is pressed, igniting a spark into the mixture, creating a precision underground shockwave.

The shockwave instantly kills the burrowing rodent while also destroying the tunnel. Although it has drawn some complaints by PETA, the American Veterinary Medical Association considers death by concussion with sufficient force to be "a humane method of euthanasia."

Because the mixture is consumed immediately and completely, it leaves no chemical residue behind. In one fell swoop, the animals are extinguished and the tunnel system local to the hole is collapsed. This eliminates handling and disposal of the carcass, and prevents re-infestation of the tunnels by neighboring rodents.

"Because the Rodenator's mixture burns clean and is completely consumed on ignition there is no chemical residue," says Goldie. "The results are instant and visible in significantly fewer holes dug and mounds created the next day. There are no worries about secondary poisoning and no worries about leftover chemicals leaching into groundwater. The process is helping parks to reclaim their open space from burrowing rodents like ground squirrels and gophers, so children can safely run and play on ball fields that were previously hazardous."

Compared to labor-intensive trapping and poison baiting, delivering an underground shockwave is surprisingly effective and labor efficient.

"The first park I did, I conquered the problem in six hours and was under budget," says Goldie. "Minimal monthly maintenance is now provided."

To further increase operator productivity and comfort, a new R3 Pest Elimination System adds wired detonation up to 25 feet from the source, and 20% more power to the industry leading Rodenator line. "Adding more power to the system while increasing operator comfort should boost productivity," adds Goldie.

According to Benites, at Las Vegas' Sunset Park a major dent in the gopher population was made after only two months of use. "After the initial 1,000 shots, I may have had to revisit 4 or 5 holes," Benites says. "In another 10-acre area, we initially were doing 100 shots a day, and then went down to 5 or 6."

Is it safe? Benites says, "Our biggest concern was, would it be safe in a park setting? We launched over 3,000 shots and have not had any complaints. We can use it during park business hours, with public being in the general area. We'll even have public people point out new holes to us, or report seeing a gopher to us."

For more info, call 1-800-750-4553; fax 208-365-3338; visit www.rodenator.com; email ed@rodenator.com; or write to Meyer Industries at PO Box 39, Emmett, ID 83617.