

Pest Profile



Photo credit: Patrick Coin - Bugguide.net

Common Name: Southern Mole Cricket

Scientific Name: *Scapteriscus borellii*

Order and Family: Orthoptera, Gryllotalpidae

Size and Appearance: Members of the family Gryllotalpidae can be distinguished by the number and spacing of the digging claws (dactyls) on their front legs. They also vary in pattern and colors displayed in the area behind their head, the pronotum. The Southern Mole Cricket has two claws on its front legs and an open “U” like spacing between them. Its pronotal region has four white dots that are easily seen due to the overall dark brown coloration of the body. After overwintering as adults, the males construct special tunnels to entice females to mate and eggs are laid in mid-March. It is typical for a female to lay thirty-five to forty eggs at a time which take about three to four weeks to hatch. Nymphs go through eight to ten molts over the course of three to four months before becoming adults.

	Length (mm)	Appearance
Egg	3 mm long 1.7 mm wide	Bean-shaped and grey to brown in color. Can increase in size as they absorb water.
Larva/Nymph	6.35 mm	8-10 instars that all resemble adults minus functioning wings.
Adult	25-35 mm	Enlarged forelegs used for digging with two claws and “U” like spacing between them. Darkened pronotum with four distinct white spots. Body color is brown. Wings are long and stick out past the abdomen of the cricket.
Pupa (if applicable)		

Type of feeder (Chewing, sucking, etc.): Nymph: Chewing; Adult: Chewing

Host plant/s: Turfgrasses are most commonly associated with the Southern mole cricket. The plants are damaged due to tunneling as the crickets search for other insects to eat. Those hit the hardest include bahiagrass and Bermudagrass. Other plants that can be damaged by the Southern mole cricket include

tomato, strawberries, beets, cabbage, carrots, cauliflower, kale, potato, turnip, peanut, sugar cane, tobacco, and chrysanthemum.

Description of Damage (larvae and adults): Both the nymphs and adults of these crickets are damaging to plants as they tunnel through the ground, disrupting the roots. The tunneling behavior exhibited by this species can dislodge plants or cause them to desiccate. The Southern mole cricket is considered a carnivore, feeding on other insects instead of roots and plants so most damage will be from tunneling underground unlike other more destructive species of mole crickets that feed on roots heavily. However, they may still cause some feeding damage to roots and tubers of plants. Damage done from plant feeding can be girdling of the stems at the soil level and damage to the roots of plants.

References:

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