

GOPHERS VS. AVOCADO TREES—GOPHERS WIN

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Statements have sometimes been made that pocket gophers are not a problem in avocado orchards. Don't you believe it. They can be a serious problem if not controlled, particularly in young, newly planted orchards.

Many of the recent avocado plantings have been established in areas virgin to any crop or any rodent control measures. The newly planted trees are like a delectable meal to the native gopher population as well as transients from nearby fields, and it doesn't take them long to undo the work of planting and growing the trees.

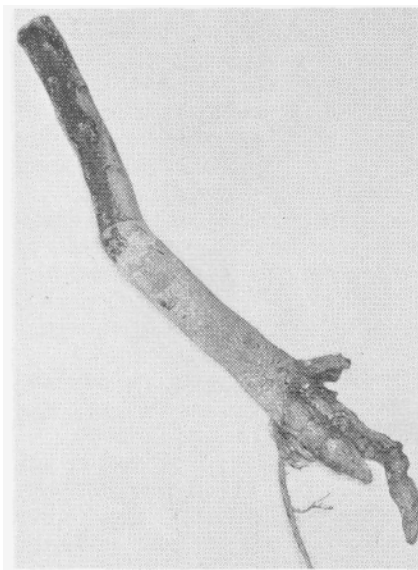


Figure 1. Gopher damage on root system of an avocado tree 18 months after planting.



Figure 2. Close-up of gopher damage showing complete loss of some roots and extensive damage to others.

Figures 1 and 2 show the remainder of a root system of an avocado tree 18 months after planting. There's not much left to nourish the tree let alone provide support to keep it upright.

Control of gophers may be accomplished by mechanical bait applicators (gopher machines) where topography allows them to be operated; by trapping; or by hand baiting operations.

The tractor-drawn gopher machine forms an artificial burrow beneath the soil surface

and deposits poison grain bait within these burrows. Under normal conditions, 85 to 95 percent and even higher gopher control can be expected. Traps and poison bait are older but effective methods if followed with diligence and persistence.

No matter which method is used, it's a contest of gophers vs. avocado trees and the gophers will win unless controlled.