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### G80-486 Crickets (Revised June 1987)

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## Crickets

**Crickets: identification, damage, and control.**

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### Description and Life Cycle

Crickets belong to the order Orthoptera, most members of which have enlarged hind legs, adapted for jumping. In addition, members of this group possess opaque, leather-like forewings that cover a pair of clear, membranous hindwings. Most crickets are nocturnal, whereas their grasshopper cousins are active only during the daytime. Members of the cricket family usually have very long antennae and their wings have the front margin folded sharply over the side of the body, giving them a "boxlike" appearance. Female crickets are characterized by having long, spear-shaped ovipositors, used for egg-laying.

Crickets are sometimes confused with cockroaches, especially the Oriental cockroach, often referred to as the "water bug." Crickets may be distinguished from cockroaches by their enlarged hind legs and the fact that their bodies are not flattened from top to bottom like those of cockroaches.

Male crickets can "sing," the song produced by either rubbing a leg against a wing or by rubbing one wing against another. This process, called "stridulation", results in a series of chirps. The chirp's function is to attract the female cricket to the male. Each species has a characteristic chirp that is recognized and responded to only by females of the same species. The sound receptor or "ear" of the cricket is located on the front side of the foreleg, and consists of a small pit with a thin, drumlike membrane stretched across the top. The membrane picks up the vibrations of the chirp and transmits them to a sensory nerve, which relays the message to the brain.

Once the female cricket is mated, she seeks loose, friable soil in which to deposit her eggs. The ovipositor is then thrust into the ground and the eggs (150 to 400) are deposited. Unlike grasshoppers, the eggs are laid singly, and are not cemented together in "pods." The over-wintered eggs hatch in May

and June and the young crickets work their way to the soil surface. Young crickets closely resemble adults, but they are smaller and do not have fully developed wings or functional sexual organs. Since wings are not completely developed and functional until sexual maturity, immature crickets cannot stridulate or "sing." Between feeding periods, the young insects molt from 8 to 10 times, growing a little more at each molt. Most crickets mature in August and September. There is normally only one generation each year.

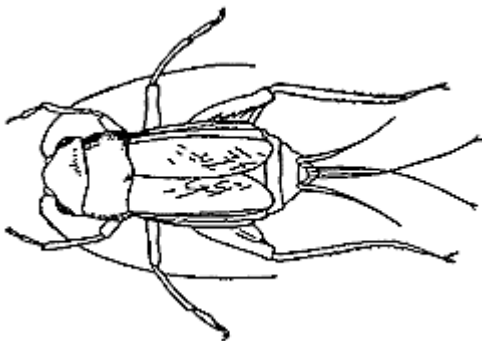
## Damage

Crickets have been known to damage plant seedlings, seeds of grain crops and alfalfa, strawberries, tomatoes, and other horticultural crops. In addition, crickets can damage stored tubers or fruits. In hay meadows, crickets often chew through baler twine. On the positive side, crickets often eat large numbers of other insects, some of which are agricultural pests.

In homes, crickets sometimes chew on clothing, draperies, or furniture (upholstery). They are particularly fond of fabrics containing organic materials such as cotton, silk, or wool, but occasionally they may damage synthetic fibers (nylon, rayon, etc.). This is more likely to occur if food has been spilled on them.

## Common Nebraska Crickets

The cricket family (Gryllidae) includes three basic types: field crickets, tree crickets and mole crickets. The most common species of field crickets in Nebraska are the common field cricket, *Gryllus assimilis* Fab. (Figure 1), and the striped ground cricket, *Nemobius fasciatus* (DeGeer). The former is a large (body about 1 inch), black-bodied cricket that is especially noticeable in August and September, and is commonly found under boards, boxes, stones, hay bales, or piles of plant debris. The female has a sharp ovipositor, nearly 3/4 inch in length. The body of the striped field cricket is smaller (about 3/4 inch), gray to brown in color, and has tapering wings. It is a strong flier and is highly attracted to lights.



**Figure 1. Field cricket.**

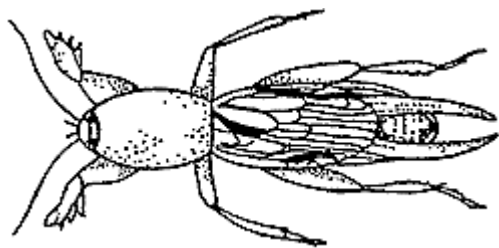
The snowy tree cricket is the most common tree cricket in Nebraska. Tree crickets are slender, greenish insects that live among tall weeds, trees, or bushes, upon which they feed. Females sometimes damage twigs of young trees by inserting their saw-like ovipositors to deposit eggs.

Mole crickets (Figure 2) live underground, particularly near standing water. These unusual insects feed on plant roots, smaller insects, and earthworms in the soil. Mole crickets are cylindrical and about 1.25 inch long. The body is brown and covered with fine velvety hairs. The most unusual feature of the insect is its mole-like, paddle-shaped forelegs, adapted to increase their effectiveness for burrowing. The forelegs are further modified to form a scissors-like apparatus used for cutting roots. In the south, mole crickets sometimes become pests on golf courses, where they damage the roots of grasses on greens and fairways.

## Control

In late summer when temperatures begin to fall, crickets often enter homes and become a nuisance by damaging stored food or clothing, or by making noise. Single crickets may be captured by hand and

released outdoors or killed with a fly swatter, broom, or with insecticides. A short burst of an aerosol spray formulation containing pyrethrins should be sufficient, but this will not provide residual control. If crickets are numerous, residual insecticides are usually the best answer.



**Figure 2. Common mole cricket.**

A chemical cricket "barrier" may be set up by spraying outside the house, around the foundation and about 5 feet out into flower beds or the lawn with one of the following products: acephate (Orthene), carbaryl (Sevin), chlorpyrifos (Dursban), diazinon (Diazinon, Spectracide), malathion, or propoxur (Baygon). Mix and follow directions for use on the product label.

For indoor use, the following are suggested to control crickets: chlorpyrifos (Dursban), diazinon, malathion, and propoxur (Baygon). Follow all label instructions with regard to mixing and application.

Insecticides may be available in various formulations, including emulsifiable concentrates, wettable powders, dusts, granulars and aerosols. Insecticides in EC formulations are often better for indoor use. Aerosols are useful to kill individual insects, but are more expensive and may not be as effective as more general, residual treatments.

Always **read, understand and follow all label directions and precautions.** Keep insecticides in original containers with the label intact. Do not contaminate food, water, or dishes. Keep insecticides out of reach of children and irresponsible adults and do not allow children or pets near treated surfaces until dry.

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***File G486 under: INSECTS AND PESTS***

***H-5, Other Pests***

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