This year's mole invasion is something we're likely to see a lot more often

2 April 2013. Cambridge, UK.

As the first bright, crisp Spring days of April 2103 beckon the onset of another British Summer, many of us begin to wonder what sort of Summer we are in for. Warm or cold? Dry? Or wet, like last year?

The volatility of the British climate is legendary. On Saturday 30th March, on the eve of British Summer Time, there was snow on the ground across many regions in the UK, and a temperature of -11.2˚C was recorded in Braemar, Aberdeenshire.

Similarly, 2011 was a remarkably dry year (East Anglia was officially classed as a drought area by DEFRA), yet in 2012 we experienced the UK's second wettest year since records began in 1910. The extremes of our weather appear to be occurring more frequently, according to a Met Office analysis of data undertaken in December 2012.

The wet weather of 2012 means just one thing: a mole invasion in 2013

For those with domestic garden lawns, or even those who look after other grassed areas such as sports grounds, hotel gardens and municipal parks, wet weather means just one thing: an increase in mole hills and a battle to protect our precious turf.

The wet weather in 2012 brought about a significant increase in the UK's mole population, with millions more moles being born than in previous years. As early as June 2012, a '*Make Your Nature Count*' survey by RSPB found that 12 per cent of all gardens in Basingstoke, Hampshire, showed signs of moles, such as tunnels or hills (the RSPB also recorded a rise in the number of earthworms, the staple diet of moles). Now, some nine months later and after the deluges of Summer and Autumn 2012, we are witnessing the effects of all the rain. If you've noticed the increased number of mole hills on the grass verges of your local roads (or, indeed, within your own lawn or sports field), you are not alone. Mole hills have appeared seemingly everywhere over the winter.

Why does wet weather mean more moles?

Wet weather raises the water table and forces earthworms to come closer to the surface. It also makes the ground softer and easier to dig through, allowing moles not only to follow the worms, but also to find a mate more easily – leading to the huge increase in mole numbers this year.

Frustratingly for gardeners, saturated soil also means moles venture further from their usual habitat in the woods and hedgerows. They explore drier environments, and this can bring them into contact with humans as their travels bring them into our gardens, and beneath our painstakingly cared-for and sometimes well-drained lawns.

Extreme downpours make the problem a lot worse

George Savell, Director of mole trap experts Beagle Garden Products, thinks that the wet weather of 2012 was not just wet, it was extreme. "It is not just that it rained a lot last year, it rained extremely heavily over very short periods of time", he says. "This means the ground was unable to drain and we ended up with floods and saturated ground that remained uninhabitable by moles for extended periods of time."

Savell explains the problem caused by this pattern of rainfall: “The UK’s mole population migrated to drier ground in greater numbers than would have been the case if the ground had been able to drain gradually, if the rain had not been so heavy over short periods.”

Heavy rainfall looks likely to increase in the future

The situation looks set to continue. The December 2012 Met Office analysis in suggested that the frequency of extreme rainfall in the UK may be increasing. Statistics show that days of particularly heavy rainfall have become more common since 1960.

Extreme rain is defined as the sort of downpour you would expect once in 100 days. There are big swings in rainfall from year to year, but the overall trend has been upwards since 1960. In 2012, for instance, extreme rain fell around once every 70 days.

The first few months of 2013 have been slightly drier than average in most areas, with snow and cold temperatures characterising the period in many parts of the UK. With the exception of a few localised areas, January’s overall UK rainfall was just 88% of the average January rainfall. This is certainly good news for owners of lawns, but is it a case of ‘too little too late’? The explosion in mole numbers from 2012 has already happened, and with every downpour comes a new need for them to explore drier terrain.

As Beagle Products’ Savell says, “the increasing occurrence of extreme rainfall means the mole population is not only likely to grow in the wetter years, but they are also likely to venture further from the hedgerows and end up ruining our lawns more often. We are going to see an increasing number of domestic gardeners becoming obsessed with mole catching, and adding mole traps and mole trapping equipment to the ‘essential tools’ of their garden sheds.”

The next few months will be a telling time. A dry summer will fend off the threat of moles for many of us, but a wet one will signal an onslaught. One thing seems fairly certain, though. The battle against moles is destined to be a recurring event, and a lengthy campaign.

Ends.

ABOUT BEAGLE GARDEN PRODUCTS

Cambridge-based recent start-up Beagle Garden Products is the inventor of the *EasySet Mole Trap*. Designed and manufactured entirely in the UK, and with a British patent pending, the new trap revolutionises the way moles are caught and despatched, providing an easier and more effective method and allowing the domestic gardener to tackle the problem on their own – without the need to call in a professional mole catcher.

For further information, high resolution imagery of the EasySet mole trap, and sample products to test, please contact:

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