

Mole Catching: A Practical Guide

J Nicholls (2008). Published by The Crowood Press, Crowood Lane, Ramsbury, Wiltshire SN8 2HR, UK. 112 pp Hardback (ISBN 978-1-84797-058-9). Price £14.99.

This book is written by someone who is passionate about their way of life, and wants to bring the magic of the mole catcher to readers. The book brings together all the folklore and practical know-how relating to mole catching that may be lost if the profession of mole catcher is not taken up by the next generation.

The first chapter describes the reasons why moles need to be controlled and what methods are available. The author is dismissive of the use of chemicals, due to the lack of skill required and environmental impacts. The chapter then goes on to give an interesting history of mole catching through the ages and the traps that have been used. The traps that are in use today do not differ significantly in design to those used over 100 years ago.

Chapter two describes the biology of the mole for the general reader. There is no references to other published work on mole ecology or biology, and I would warn against using this publication as representing current scientific knowledge.

The rest of the book then describes in detail the skills required in locating, setting and using the different types of trap. The advantages and disadvantages of the different design of trap are discussed in full, followed by a detailed description of how to set each one. The effects of the weather on the success of trapping is then described. The author describes his observations on how moles' behaviour is changed with regard to the weather and therefore where the best position for any traps would be. The moles' behaviour and movements tend to be related to availability of food. A description of the three worm types that moles hunt is included in this chapter. The author recognises that moles are found in a wide variety of environments. He devotes a chapter to giving many examples of how he has managed to catch moles in these environments. A short chapter is devoted to the commercial reality of the mole-catching profession, highlighting the fact that to be successful commercially you need to be able to catch the mole with the minimum of input. The final two chapters deal with new techniques that are becoming more widespread and the future of mole catching.

The author has an extensive and deep knowledge of his subject and has successfully managed to communicate this to the reader such that having read the book you may feel capable of putting the knowledge into practice. The text is well illustrated with good quality photographs, and tips are scattered throughout the book in highlighted boxes. The writing style is easy-to-read rather than scientific however, the enthusiasm that the author has for his profession interferes at times with the information that he is giving to the reader.

Although the book is an interesting read, there is no scientific basis to much of the information included in the book. There are also two specific areas that need addressing.

Firstly, mole traps are not covered by the Spring Traps Approval Order as suggested by the author. A special order was made to exempt mole traps, which means in effect that currently any trap can be used for catching moles. In addition, no mole traps currently available have been assessed for humaneness. I therefore don't share the view of the author that currently available traps are a humane method of mole control.

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Sustainable Animal Production: The Challenges and Potential Developments for Professional Farming

Edited by A Aland and F Madec (2009). Published by Wageningen Academic Publishers, PO Box 220, 6700 AE Wageningen, The Netherlands. 496 pp Hardback (ISBN 978-90-8686-099-9). Price €70.00, US\$104.00.

At first glance, this title does not appear to have especial relevance to those interested in animal welfare. But appearances are deceptive, and animal welfare features throughout the book, with many chapters having the word 'welfare' in their title, and all considering welfare.

The book is based on papers given at the XIII Congress of the International Society for Animal Hygiene (ISAH), whose president and contributor, Professor Thomas Blaha, views animal hygiene as a major tool for maintaining the sustainability of animal husbandry by developing systems which use animal health and welfare orientated production practices, whilst also protecting the environment by intelligent waste and omission management programmes. This indicates the wide-ranging scope of the book. Indeed, one of its many strengths is the focus on integrating animal welfare science with other disciplines.

Sustainable Animal Production not only reviews current knowledge but is forward-thinking, reflecting the trend towards holistic and integrated approaches to animal production. As the EU Welfare Quality® project has found, society and consumers often consider animal welfare as one aspect of a range of quality factors, which include sustainability, food safety and minimising environmental impact.

The book has been very well edited, with a clear layout and uniform structure, including abstracts and conclusions for every chapter, thus making it very reader-friendly. In the majority of its chapters, the importance of health for animal welfare is rightly emphasised, but neither are other aspects ignored. For example, one chapter explores risk assessment methodology and another considers the use of critical control points for evaluating animal welfare. In terms of species, pigs and dairy cows are treated particularly comprehensively and there is a section devoted to poultry: sheep, however, are not considered specifically.

By providing a clear overview of current knowledge, philosophy and vision concerning animal production, this