

meadow vole *Microtus pennsylvanicus*

Kingdom: Animalia

Division/Phylum: Chordata

Class: Mammalia

Order: Rodentia

Family: Cricetidae

ILLINOIS STATUS common, native

FEATURES

The meadow vole's body fur is black with red hairs scattered throughout. The belly hair is black with a white tip. The feet are black. The tail is heavily furred and shorter than the head-body length (three and one-half to five inches) although still relatively long for a vole. Its ears are rounded and almost hidden in the hair.

BEHAVIORS

The meadow vole may be found in the northern one-half of Illinois. It lives in moist areas with grasses or sedges, marshes, along streams, in wet fields, along lake shores and in gardens. The meadow vole feeds on grasses and other green plants, bulbs, grains and seeds. It is active during the day or night. This vole uses underground burrows and above ground runways through vegetation for travel routes. Mating occurs in the spring and fall. Females less than one month old may breed and produce offspring about three weeks later. The average litter size is four or five. Young are born helpless in a nest of dry grass. They develop quickly and are ready to live on their own in about two weeks. Mortality of young voles is very high.

HABITATS

Aquatic Habitats

bottomland forests; lakes, ponds and reservoirs; marshes; peatlands; rivers and streams; wet prairies and fens

Woodland Habitats

none

Prairie and Edge Habitats

black soil prairie; edge

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