

Field Vole

Microtus agrestis

Mammal · Here all year · does not hibernate



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A small, shaggy, greyish-brown vole with a very short tail — under a third of its body length — a blunt nose and ears almost buried in fur. Field voles live in rough, tussocky grassland, young plantations, verges and set-aside across the Dumfries area, and are among the most numerous mammals in Britain. They are far more often detected by their runs and droppings than actually seen.

BEHAVIOUR

Field voles cut networks of narrow runways through the base of tussocky grass, leaving neat piles of chopped grass stems and small green droppings along them. They eat grass almost exclusively and are active around the clock in short bursts. Populations run on a boom-and-bust cycle of roughly three to five years, and the numbers of kestrels, barn owls and short-eared owls in a given year track that cycle closely.

WHEN TO SEE IT

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QUICK FACTS

FAMILY	Voles, lemmings and hamsters (Cricetidae)
SIZE	Body 8–13 cm plus a 2–4.5 cm tail
UK STATUS	Abundant and widespread; not protected

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