Appendix I: Identification of grassland water vole field signs

Water Vole Field Signs **Description/Identification Burrow Entrance** Diameter 4-8cm. Can be found on slopes or flat ground (Example 1) Burrow wider than it is tall (Example 2). Can be dug out by other animals so may occasionally appear much larger at entrance. Well-defined opening when in use. Tends to be in the open away from buildings, trees, etc (water voles (1) appear to favour garden decking and porta-cabins however). Water voles favour grassland with tussock-forming grass species Burrows can persist in the environment for years (water voles tend to be less active above ground during the winter months but may still be using the burrow) Fan-shaped soil mound outside (occasional – tends to be when the burrow is freshly dug). Clipped grass from feeding remains can be found around entrance (most common in springtime). (Example Droppings around entrance (most common during the breeding season from April to Sept). Water voles can abandon a burrow system but return to it the following season/year(s). Water voles frequently block up burrow entrances using a mixture of soil, shredded grass and moss. This tends to be in response to disturbance or periods of heavy rainfall. (Example 4)

Water Vole Field Signs



Description/Identification

Soil Mound (also known as a tumulus)

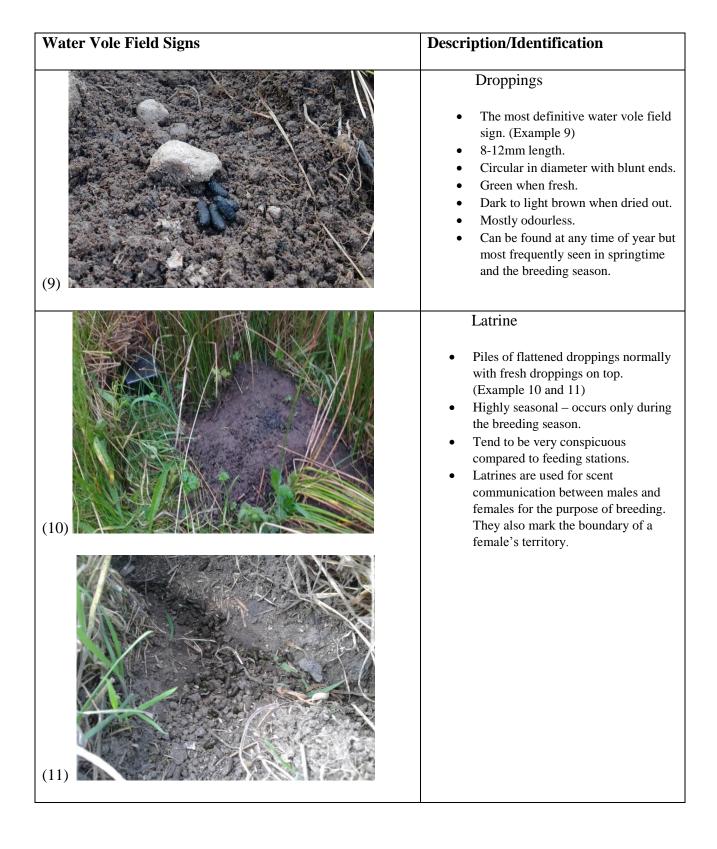
- Flattened soil mound created as a by-product of burrowing (diameter of each mound is variable). (Example 5)
- Similar in appearance to a molehill but not as tall or conical-shaped.
- Often seen alongside a burrow entrance.
- Tend to be found in clusters rather than singular. (Example 6)
- Most frequently recorded during Spring and Autumn because they indicate periods of high activity associated with breeding then dispersal.

(6)



Feeding Station

- Water voles spend many hours foraging for plant material which they collect into piles. (Example 7 and 8)
- Collected plant material can be of varying lengths depending on the amount eaten but it will always be cut at a 45° angle.
- Piles can frequently be found at the base of a grass tussock or somewhere relatively covered.
- Water voles eat a broad range of vegetation including grasses, sedges, rush, bark, seeds and berries.



Water Vole Field Signs **Description/Identification** Other field signs (12) – nest material (13) – above-ground run (14) – run and burrow revealed post-snow cover (15) - soil mound showing digging underneath hardstanding (16) – burrows underneath decking (12)(17) – dried out latrine because of hot summer weather (18) – burrow system underneath plywood (19) – close up of nest material shown in (18) (13)



