

What to Do about Infestations

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According to Keith the Bandit, Ahrder had taken over a fort at the edge of the hills to the north. After his prayers, Kellan fetched his horse and rode out, contemplating how quickly Ahrder and his band of thugs and thieves would repair the ruined fort, and how he would break in.

Grunts of frustration interrupted Kellan's contemplation. An old farmer was manically driving a hoe into a mound-pocked carrot field beside the road. Had he reached the outer farms already?

Curiosity got the better of Kellan, so he slowed his horse and approached the farmer. "Murdering your carrots is going to make them grow any faster," he said, dismounting.

The farmer planted the hoe and leant on it, panting. "Ain't me who's been murdering them. It's this blasted mole infestation."

"Need a hand?"

The farmer offered Kellan the hoe. "Be my guest."

Kellan shook his head. "I've got this. Just hold onto her for a few minutes." The farmer took the horse's reins stood back, puzzled. A dozen molehills – those the farmer hadn't ruined yet – were clustered together in this corner of the field. The infestation was starting to get out of hand.

He and Keith were not so careless.

Kellan unhooked his mace and tossed it high in the air. He watched turn gently as it stopped and fell, and magically caught it. Putting it back on his belt, he conjured an armoury of iron spikes, arraying them over the field and covering every inch of the mole's fortresses. When they were in position, he plunged them into the ground. Lifting them back out, he found he'd speared a handful of the moles. Kellan piled them in a heap, then plunged the spikes in again. Every mole he killed he imagined to be a bandit or thief from Diea, every thrust into the ground a knife to the heart of the encroaching syndicate. If the Dieans burrowed their tunnels into Atla, they would not be so easily removed. He would do what this farmer had not, and eradicate them before they got the chance.