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Gopher facts and statistics

Rodent Control-Pocket Gophers

Understanding Behavior and
Control Strategies on Alfalfa



Gopher Facts...

Economic Damage

- Nebraska reports decreased yields of 17% on irrigated alfalfa and 35% on dryland alfalfa.
- Gopher tunnels funnel off irrigation water and cause soil erosion.
- Gophers are bad news on alfalfa!

Gopher Facts...

Economic Damage

- Gophers reduce productivity of alfalfa fields and native grasslands from 20-50%.
- If 10% of a field is infested, forage productivity will be reduced from 2-5%
- Gopher mounds dull and plug sickle bars when harvesting

Gopher Facts- Biology



- Gophers do not hibernate and are active year round. (not so with squirrels)
- Gophers are fossorial in nature living most of their life underground.
- Gophers are grumpy solitary animals living alone with densities as high as 16-20 per acre.

Gopher Facts- Biology



- Gophers reach maturity in one year and live an average of 3 years.
- Litters occur 1-3 times per year with 5-6 pups per litter.
- Irrigated acres = more litters.

Incisors always exposed



Opening of fur-lined
cheek pouch

Fig. 2. Pocket gopher characteristics.



Thomomys



Geomys



Pappogeomys

Fig. 3. These three genera of pocket gophers can be differentiated by relative size of forefeet and front surfaces of upper incisors.

Gopher Facts-Feeding Behavior

- Gopher are herbivorous- plants, shrubs, trees.
- Utilize sense of smell to locate food.
- Love “roots” and fleshy portions of plants they find when digging.

Gopher Facts-Feeding Behavior

- Infrequently found above ground feeding close to burrow opening...."feed holes"
- **GOPHERS WILL GNAW DRIP IRRIGATION LINES BELOW OR ABOVE GROUND !**

Gopher Facts- Burrow System

- Consist of a main tunnel 4"-18" below soil surface with any number of lateral tunnels extending from the main.
- Lateral tunnels end with a soil mound or soil plug...typically fan shaped.
- A tunnel system may contain upwards of 200 linear yards of tunnel
 - (2 football fields !)

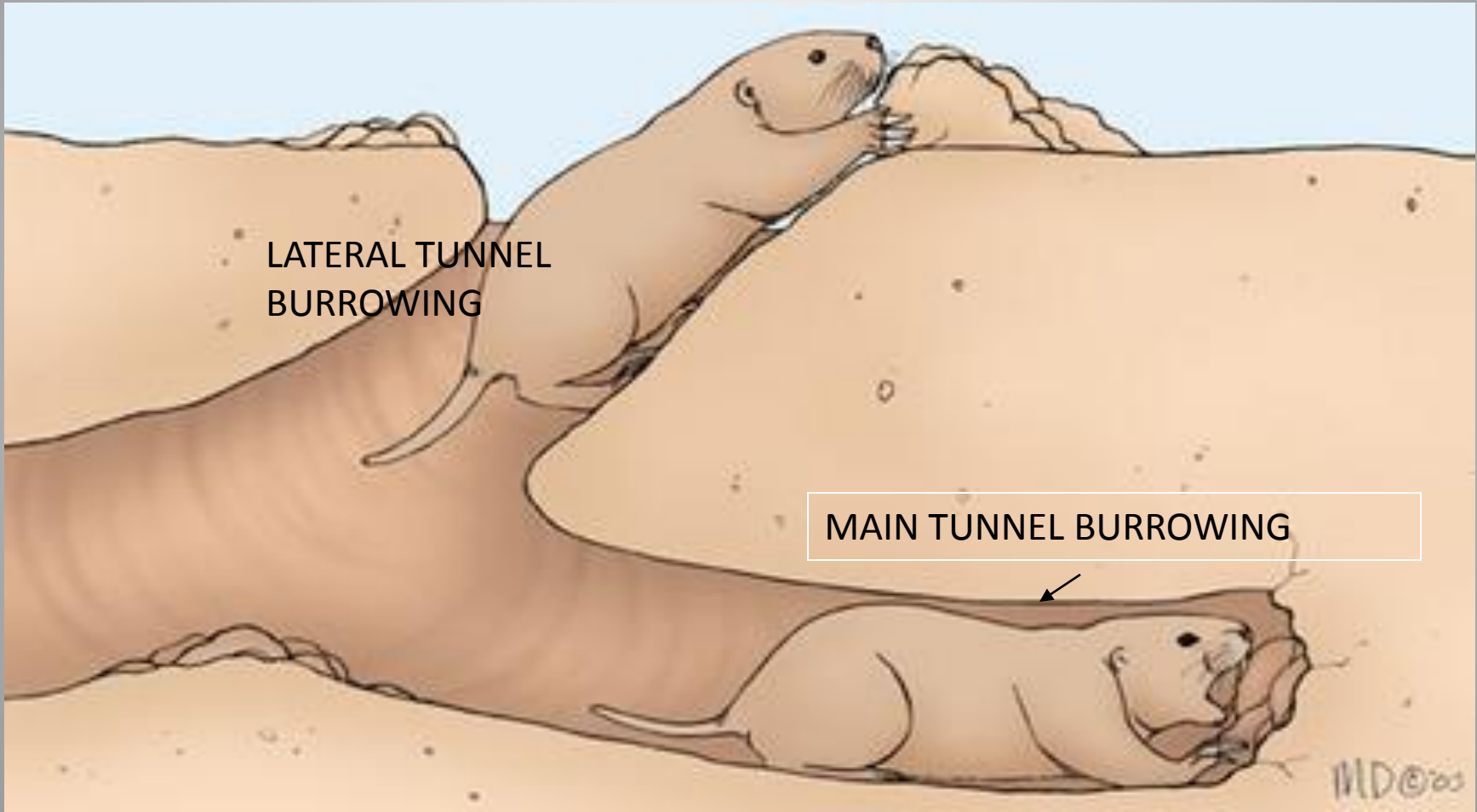


Gopher Facts- Burrow System

- A Gopher typically constructs one to three new mounds per day.
- One gopher will bring as much as 2 ¼ tons of soil to the surface EACH YEAR.
- Spring and Fall are periods of greatest mound building.





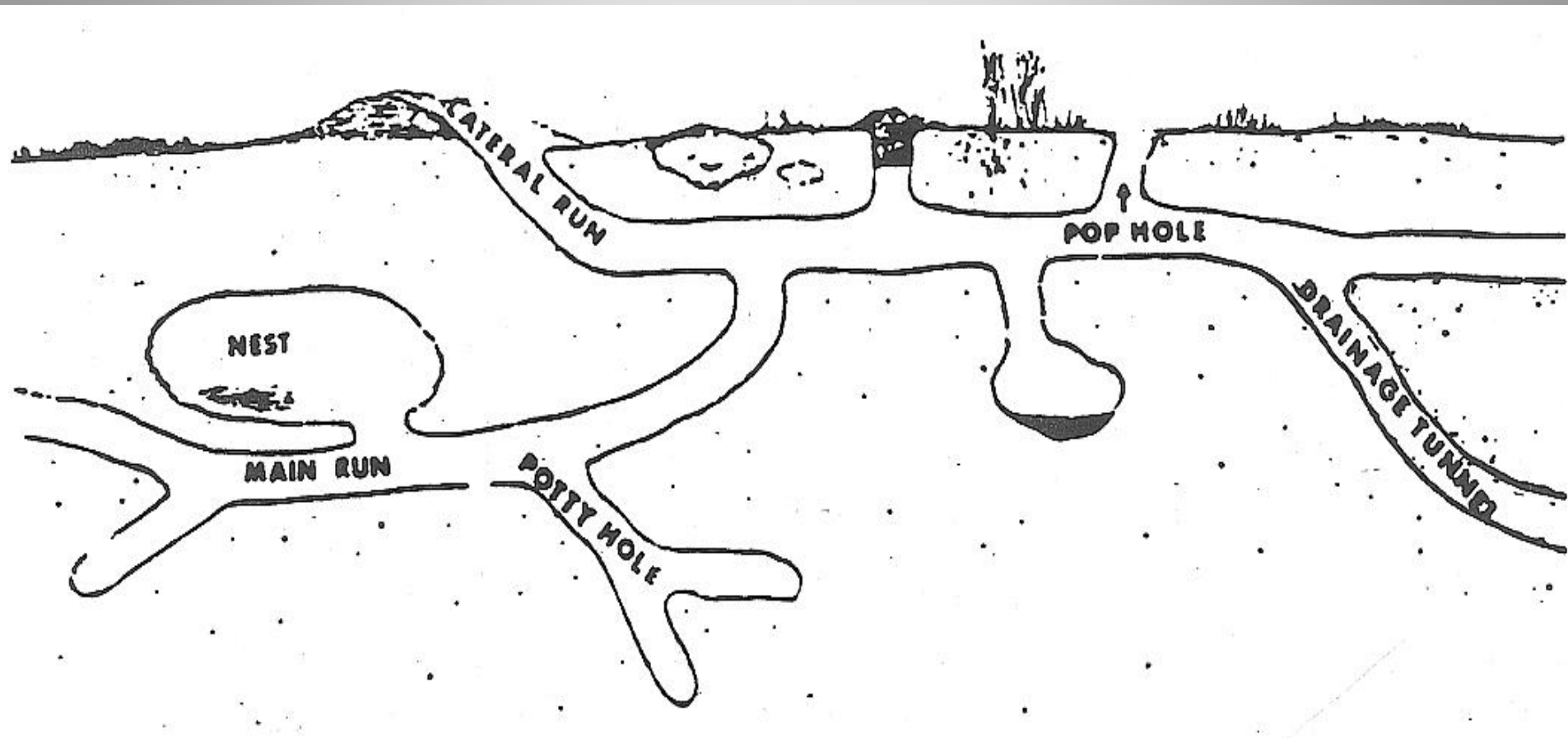


LATERAL TUNNEL
BURROWING

MAIN TUNNEL BURROWING

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GOPHER BURROW SYSTEM



CAN ENCOMPASS SEVERAL ACRES

Doesn't Work or Marginal

Electrical Devices

Water Hose

Road Flairs

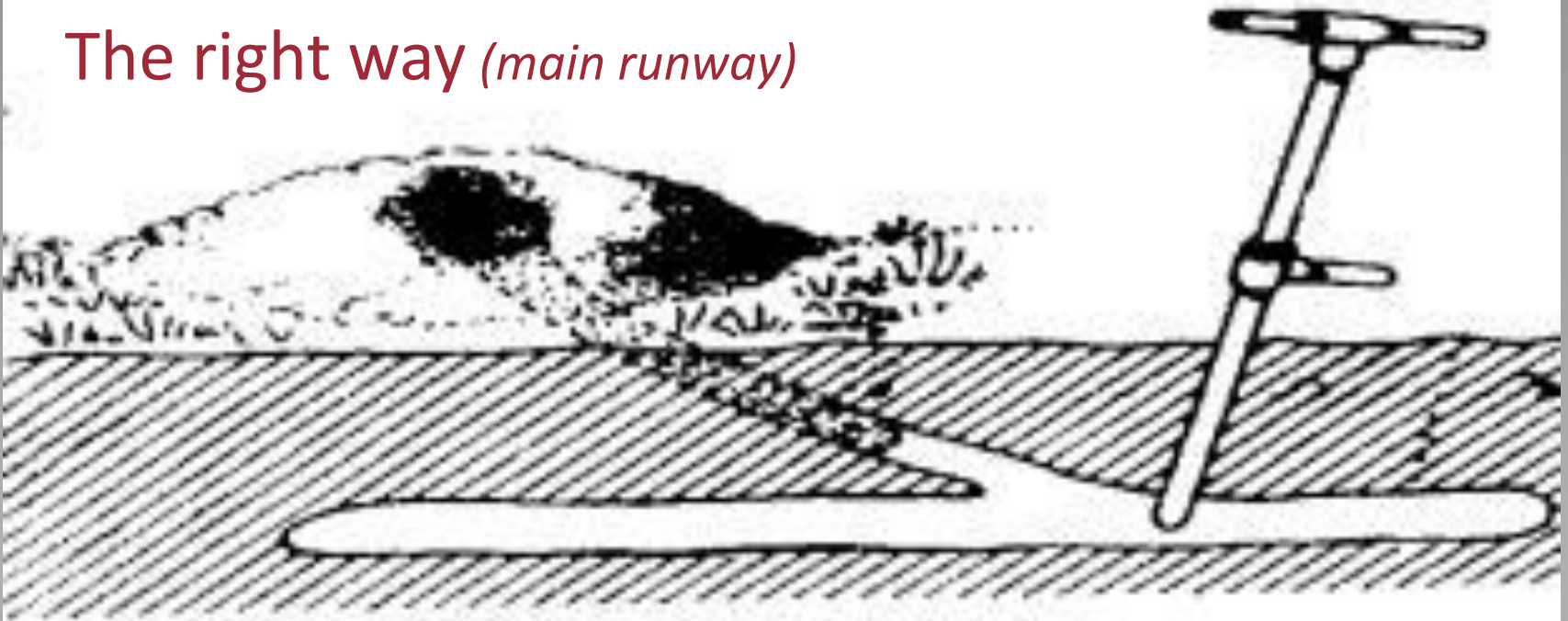
Gopher Purge

Gasoline

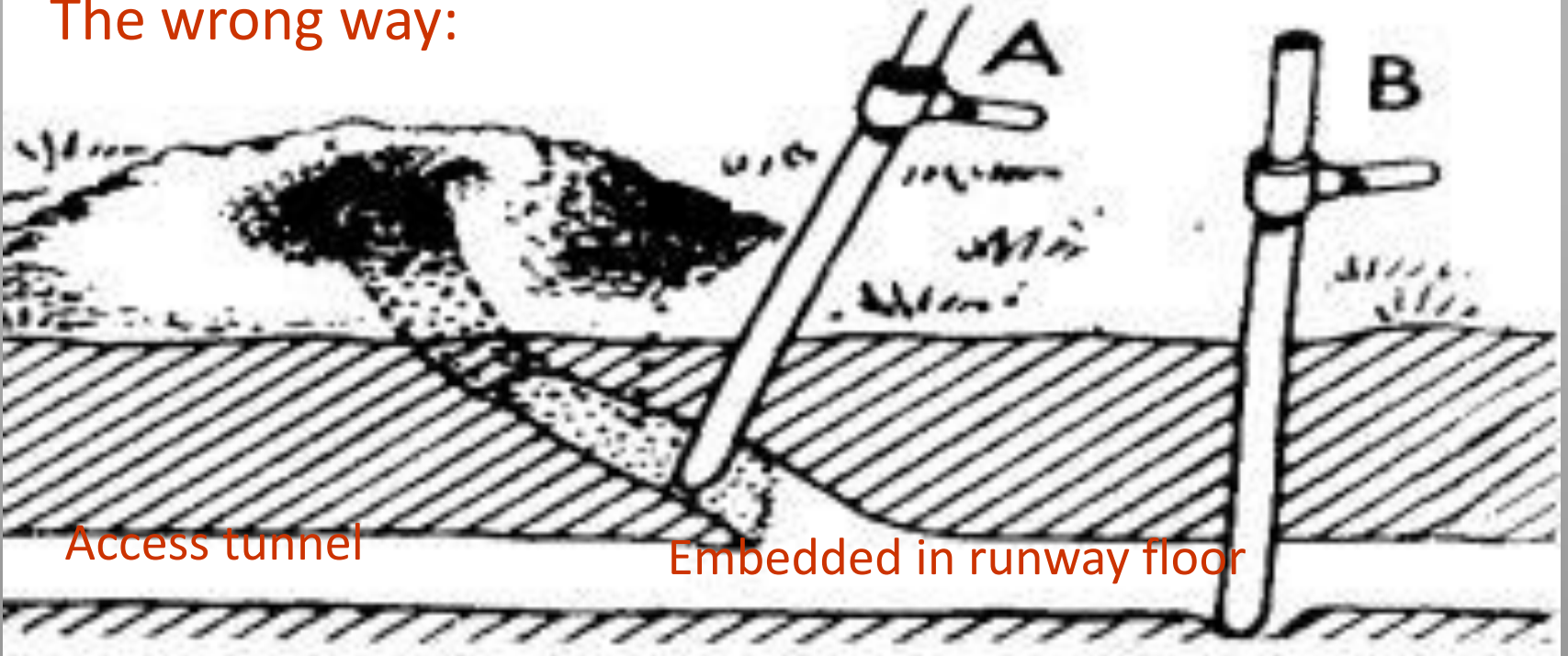
Chewing Gum, Water Bottle. Ground Glass, Banana Peel.

Sticking Dead Gopher Back in Hole

The right way (*main runway*)



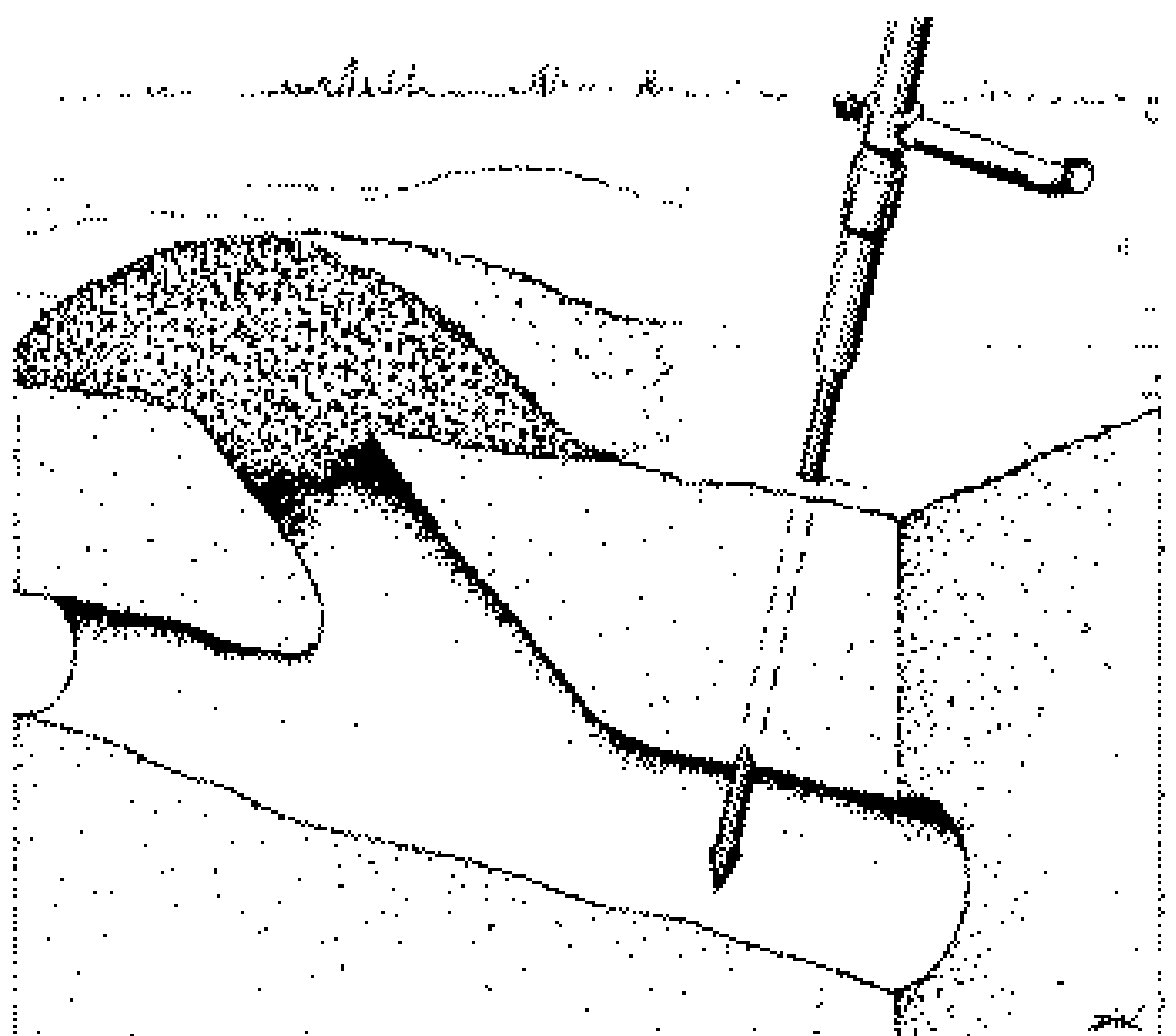
The wrong way:



Access tunnel

Embedded in runway floor

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