Nebraskans may be seeing more lawn and garden damage this fall from critters. Reports of lawns looking like sows have rooted them up aren't uncommon.

However, University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension specialists say the best thing to do is to just plan on reseeding damaged spots next spring or while grass is dormant.

Many critters, such as raccoons, skunks, opossums, turkeys and even badgers, are just hunting for grubs and earthworms to eat, said Dennis Ferraro, UNL herpetologist.

Ferraro and Zac Reicher, UNL Extension integrated turfgrass management specialist, said as of right now, there really is nothing you can do. Both have had a higher number of calls this fall about animals digging up people's yards.

"The good news is with cooler temperatures, the grubs will be moving down into the soil," Reicher said.

He added that is why it's important to apply grub control each year.

"If you had grubs this year, they almost always come back to the same lawns year after year, so plan on using preventative grub control next July," he said.

Critters often are out looking for grubs this time of year. The thing that makes this year different is since adult beetles only lay eggs in damp soils, even if a lawn just had a little irrigation, it is softer than a lot of other areas, so they are attracted to irrigated areas and areas that are green.

"That is why folks with nice green lawns may be feeling a lot more hurt than in past years," he said.

Reicher said the average homeowner should instead be focusing on what to do to bring lawns back.

"Many lawns are already in bad shape because of the drought," he said. "So, homeowners should plan on dormant seeding anytime near Thanksgiving into March."

Reicher said it is too late to seed now and expect germination before winter, but it may also be too early where some of the seed may germinate only to die in the winter. Instead, wait a month and seed well into November. He said while spring seeding can be successful, it is often delayed by wet soils in the spring costing valuable time when the seedlings have to compete with germinating weeds. He said the benefits of dormant seeding is that the work can be done in late fall/winter when the soils are dry enough to work and the seed is in place to take full advantage of warming soil temperatures the follow spring.

Dormant seeding also is beneficial due to the soil heaving and cracking during the winter which improves seed-soil contact and improves germination. For more information about turf, visit http://turf.unl.edu/.

Ferraro said the drought also is bringing out some unusual critters around homes of people who have kept lawns watered. He said he's even had a report of a smooth green snake, which is a rare species in the state.

In addition, squirrels, while often problematic even in wet years, are reported to strip trees of their bark in dry years looking for moisture.

"So if there is no snow and no moisture this fall and winter and you have these animals around, you may want to make sure there is a water supply," he said.

He said a low-lying bird bath with a bubbler in it would be sufficient water source.