

Nematomorph and Mermithoid Nematodes

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These tan or cream-colored nematodes (Fig. 1) appear as slender, thread-like worms, reaching several inches in length. They are sometimes called horsehair worms. Of the nematomorph or mermithoid nematodes with known life cycles, most are parasitic on various insects, but some parasitize other animals such as crustaceans and mollusks. The larval stage is parasitic. The larval form found on soil and plant surfaces probably causes the greatest concern. The free-living adult form generally resides in soil and water, and do not feed whatsoever. The nematodes should not harm people, plants, or pets (unless the pet is an insect or other animal without a backbone). If the nematodes are found on edible plants, rinse the plant parts thoroughly to remove the nematodes before the time of harvest.

General References:

Chang, T.C. 1964. *The Biology of Animal Parasites*. W.B. Saunders Co., Philadelphia. 727 p; and Hickman, C.P. 1961. *Integrated Principles of Zoology*. C.V. Mosby Co., 2nd Ed., 972 p.



Fig. 1. A horsehair worm taken from a beetle. By A.L. Antonelli.



Nematode emerging from grasshopper