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B. H. Kantack
South Dakota State University

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B. H. Kantack
Extension Entomologist
South Dakota State University

Gordiid or "horsehair" worms are slender and very long (8 to 16 inches in length). They vary in color from almost white to light tan to dark brown. Larvae of this parasite feed inside many insects including June beetles, grasshoppers, crickets, cockroaches, cabbage worms and probably many other insects. Infection occurs when insects, during their feeding activities, ingest gordiid larvae. Once inside an insect they molt and grow. When gordiids reach the adult stage, they emerge from their host. They may attract attention by squirming and twisting about and knotting themselves into a loose "ball". They are frequently found on cabbage heads, on garden soil, in water troughs, swimming pools, or wherever the host insect happened to be when the worm left its body. Gordiids are often numerous just after a rain. These worms do not cause any injury to man or plants. Actually they are beneficial because they usually kill the insect in which they lived.

Mermithids, another kind of nematode, also attack insects. Adult mermithids are wormlike in shape and bear a close resemblance to gordiid worms. They occasionally are found coiled up in the soil, often under stones. They are slender, 4 to 8 inches long, and either gray or almost black in color. Insects become infected with mermithids by ingesting eggs or by having young mermithids penetrate their body walls. Feeding of mermithids inside the insect often prevents the development of the host reproductive organs. Pre-adult mermithids emerge from their hosts and enter the soil where they complete their development. Mermithids parasitize almost all groups of insects, so they are considered beneficial nematodes.

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