

HORSEHAIR WORM

*Chordodes
Formosanus*

K Venkataraman



Image Credit: Wikimedia Commons

CHORDODES *formosanus* is commonly known as the Horsehair worm. Chordodes is very long, thin and thread-like and looks like a strand of horse hair; hence, it has the name Horsehair worm. This worm has yet another name, known as the Gordian worm. In Greek mythology, the Gordian knot was an extremely complex and highly tangled knot that was difficult to untie. These worms often twist and coil themselves into tight knots when they are in water or when several worms gather together. It belongs to the Phylum Nematomorpha, Class Gordioidea, Order Gordiida and Family Gordodidae. This worm is a parasite and the praying mantis is its primary host. This worm is also a parasitoid. A parasitoid lives inside a host, feeds on the tissues of the host and finally kills the host. It is a harmful parasite, especially for praying

mantis. These worms are structurally similar to nematode worms and belong to pseudocoelomata. Females appear to have a round and slightly swollen posterior end of their bodies, while males have a narrowed end. They don't have a distinct head, no jaws or complex feeding structures. The outer covering is made of a collagen-like protein. It has a simple nervous system. These worms parasitise only invertebrates such as insects but are harmless to humans and plants.

These worms are dioecious with internal fertilisation. Adults have cylindrical gonads opening into the cloaca. The females lay thousands of eggs in long gelatinous strings attached to plants and stones. The eggs hatch into microscopic larvae. These larvae must enter an insect host to survive. These larvae have rings of cuticular hooks and terminal stylets