

Haemonchus placei

large stomach worm, twisted wire worm, barber's pole worm

Description: Internal parasite. Adults are 10 – 30 mm long. Males are shorter than females and have an even, reddish color and a bursa with an asymmetrical dorsal lobe and barbed spicules. Females are identified as barber's pole worms because their white ovaries are wound around their red blood-filled intestine.

Life Cycle: Eggs laid by adults in the abomasum are passed in the feces and hatch on the ground. On pasture they undergo a typical series of molts, becoming infective in about 4 – 6 days. Cattle then ingest the larvae, beginning the infection. Fertile adults appear in approximately 28 days, but it is important to note that signs of the disease can appear sooner because larvae and immature adults, as well as fertile adults, suck blood.

Geographic Distribution: Worldwide, though primarily a parasite of tropical regions.

Significance: Stomach worm, a common parasite, is one of the most pathogenic nematode parasites of ruminants. Very heavy infections often cause death in young and well-fed animals. Adult *Haemonchus* and 4th-stage larvae puncture small blood vessels of the abomasal wall to feed on the blood. The host must replace this blood, particularly the lost red cells, and therefore draws on its limited iron reserves. Once these are exhausted, iron deficiency anemia results, and death can occur if the anemia is severe. The disease haemonchosis is characterized by anemia, edema, and weight loss.