

INTRODUCTION

Nematodes are about as ubiquitous as is consistent with their need for at least a film of water in which to move. About 10 000 species are known, half of them free living. The latter vary in length up to 10 mm. With the majority of soil species lying between 0.5 and 2 mm. Soil and Fresh-water nematodes form one ecological group with many species uncommon. Soil forms are most numerous vertically in the top two inches and horizontally in the region of roots, especially grass, where many species bearing a mouth-stylet occur, some of these may be ectoparasitic in habit. Nematodes may be herbivorous (algae, fungi, higher plants), carnivorous (nematodes or other small animals), or bacterivorous (the so-called 'saprophagous' species). They occur in soil at densities (up to 20 million per m²) higher than in fresh or salt water.

Soil nematodes are living on plant roots as ectoparasites or enter the plant tissues via the roots and become endoparasites in leaves and stems. They do vast damage to crops, not only by feeding on the plants and causing them to become stunted, unyielding and less resistant to diseases, but also by activity transmitting virus diseases and allowing entry of fungi and bacteria through the damaged roots. Many produce galls. Their eggs remain dormant in the soil for long periods and often hatch out only under the influence of chemical substances