

## Whether we like it or not, most animals — including humans — share their bodies with parasites such as worms, fleas, lice and ticks.

The South Australian Museum is home to Australia's most important repository of preserved parasites, the Australian Helminthological Collection, also known as the **Parasitology Collection**. There are over 42,000 specimen 'lots' in total. They have been collected over the last 130 years from many different species of land and marine animals, from Australia and further afield.

### Importance & History

As unusual as it may sound — can you imagine drawers and shelves filled with jars of worms? The Parasitology Collection is an extremely important and significant scientific resource.



Drawers full of parasitic worms (helminths) stored in glass bottles containing approximately 30 ml of ethanol in the Parasitology Collection at the South Australian Museum.

Australian and international scientists regularly use the specimens as a starting point to identify and describe parasites they encounter in domestic, rural and aquatic situations. This allows scientists to better understand the evolution and life cycles of parasites, and describe and manage new species that are found on animals we encounter in our built and natural environments.

More than 5000 of the Parasitology Collection specimens are type specimens: this means they formed the first physical examples on which the description of new parasite species are based. Such specimens have enormous historical and scientific value.

The Parasitology Collection is an important and internationally renowned collection. A large proportion of the worms in this collection were donated by one of Australia's most famous parasitologists and zoologists, [Professor T. Harvey Johnston](#). Some of Johnston's

specimens were collected when he travelled to Antarctica as Chief Zoologist with Sir Douglas Mawson in 1929 as part of the British, Australian and New Zealand Antarctic Research Expeditions.

### **Important Information for Researchers Returning Loans or Depositing New Material**

When you return borrowed slides and/or unmounted material in ethanol or if you intend to deposit new material for registration in our Parasitology Collection, [please follow these instructions](#).

For all **new** material sent to us for registration, this [Excel spreadsheet](#) shows the data we require. Please complete the template accurately to ensure our database will contain correct information about your specimens and email to [Dr Leslie Chisholm](#) in advance of sending the shipment to avoid any difficulties with Australian customs and/or Australian quarantine.