



PondNet: Identifying medicinal leech



Medicinal leech

Hirudo medicinalis



Meet the leech

- There are c10 native species of leech in this country, but only two large leeches in the family *Hirudinae*
- And only one of these, the medicinal leech, which can feed on mammals



Medicinal leech
(*Hirudo medicinalis*)



Horse leech
(*Haemopsis sanguisuga*)

Meet the leech

- **Medicinal leech** can reach up to 20cm long.
- They are distinctive in having red and yellow stripes along their upper side. Some individuals may be very dark.
- Vivid yellow and black spotting on their underside.
- They are drawn to disturbance to feed and will attach and draw blood if allowed!

Medicinal leech



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Medicinal leech



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Meet the leech

- **Horse leech** up to 16 cm in length.
- Dull and uniform in colour: Upper surface - dark brown to black. Underside - green to grey.
- Sometimes with a lateral yellow stripe, and flecks of black on underside. No yellow spotting underneath.
- May come to disturbance to Hoover up worms but will not try to attach itself to you!



Horse leech

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Horse leech

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Medicinal leech



Horse leech



Medicinal leech



Medicinal leech

What is their habitat type?

- Typically found in naturally eutrophic ponds, tarns and ditches with a neutral pH.
- The sites are shallow, or with a broad shallow margin.
- The margins are well vegetated with sedges, rushes and other marginal pond plants.
- Importantly the ponds need to have an abundant supply of food.







