

Colus hirudinosus



Colus hirudinosus © A.J. & S.G. Pearson

Egg: white or grey, may be mottled grey or brown on top; to 25 mm diameter; smooth skinned, white rhizomorphs at the base; upon maturity, it splits into several short, irregular lobes; the egg remnants are seen as a volva at the base of the mature fruiting body's stem.

Fruit body: a short stem that flares out into an open network of joined arms to make a cage-like structure; this net suddenly changes to a much tighter mesh at the top of the cage; to 70 mm high and 20 mm wide; with 3 – 7 arms, united at the base to form the stipe, vertical, joining to become a very open cage which arches over and abruptly changes at the top to become an evenly spaced and much tighter mesh, the fertile part of the receptacle. Surface wrinkled across the width of the arm, colour pale pink, orange or bright red. The arms are made up of a double layer of tubes – a large inner one and two or three small outer ones.

Stipe: very short, broad, hollow; up to 15 × 12 mm; slightly wrinkled surface and pale orange to red in colour; made up of joined arms which become free to form the net above; interior consists of a single layer of vertical tubes, sometimes with the hint of a second layer.

Gleba (Spore mass): dark toned, purplish or olive-brown, thick and slimy; carried on the underside of the upper mesh and on the inner side of the arms below.

Flesh: cellular, spongy.

Smell: foetid, fishy.

Spore print: olivaceous brown.

Spores: cylindrical to almost baciliform; 3.5 – 6.5 × 1 - 2.4 µm; smooth, hyaline.

Substrate: on soil and litter.

Habitat: grows singly or in groups in moist or winter-wet depressions in open forest and woodland, swampy forest areas.

Notes: There may be some confusion between *Colus hirudinosus* and *Colus pusillus* as both species are of a similar size, structure and colouration and both are highly variable in appearance. The main distinction between the two is the tight mesh-like structure at the top of *C. hirudinosus*, whilst *C. pusillus*'s net at the top is much larger and more open.