

FAMILY AETIDEIDAE

Body swollen ; head measuring 2 to 8 mm and pedigerous segment I, also pedigerous segments 4 and 5, usually fused. Last metasomal segment usually prolonged into two posterior stout spines. Rostrum short, strongly sclerotised, simple or bifid, rarely absent ; reduced in male. Urosome with four segments in female ; male with five segments, anal segment short. Antenna 1 23- to 25- jointed in female ; male with reduced number of joints, proximal joints swollen with many club-shaped aesthetes. Exopod of antenna 2 often bigger than endopod. Maxilla 1 inner lobe 1 usually with nine marginal spines, four setae on posterior surface and one small seta on inner proximal border ; sometimes number of posterior surface setae reduced. Maxilla 2 lobe 5 usually large with one seta spine-like. Male mouthparts reduced compared with female. Leg 1 endopod one-jointed, leg 2 endopod two-jointed, all other rami three-jointed. Some degree of fusion between swimming leg joints may occur. Basipod joint 1 of female leg 4 often with spines on inner border. Leg 5 nearly always absent in female ; in male leg 5 endopod has varying degrees of development. (Rose 1933).

Members of the family Aetideidae tend to be larger forms which have a pelagic or hyperbenthic habit. Some genera are clearly either pelagic or hyperbenthic. Most pelagic aetideids have a mesopelagic or bathypelagic habit.

Aetideids are mixed feeders with mouthparts adapted for seizing and filtration (Arashkevich, 1969). Gut contents include a wide variety of organisms (Mullin 1966, Arashkevich 1969, Harding 1974).