

Zombie Fungus

Ophiocordyceps unilateralis

What are Cordyceps?

There are an estimated 700+ species of Cordyceps. A few hundred are parasitic. The most well known is *Ophiocordyceps unilateralis*, "zombie-ant fungus".



How They Work

Parasitic cordyceps live in tropical environments. They invade a host's body, consume its nutrients, and fill it with spores. They use chemical attacks to control movement.

Mind Control

"Zombie-ant Fungus" uses brain signals to force the host to go to a high place where the host will bite down and die. The host's body will burst, releasing its spores to infect more insects.

Can They Infect Us?

Parasitic fungi typically infect cold-blooded species. Some scientists hypothesize this helped warm-blooded species evolve. Yet some species of fungi have recently been found to be developing thermotolerance. Climate change may increase this tolerance.

