Live Crickets & Mealworms Care Guide

Drs. Foster & Smith Educational Staff

Many reptiles have a daily diet that consists partly or entirely of insects, and the two most commonly fed insects are live crickets and live mealworms. In order for your reptile to get the most nutrition out of his diet, it's important that you know how to properly care for your feeder insects.

Housing

Crickets should be kept in a Faunarium. It must have a secure lid to prevent them from escaping and smooth, plastic sides that are easy to clean and disinfect. Crickets do not need substrate, but they will need lots of hiding spots to lessen the chance of cannibalism (paper towel tubes and egg crates work well).

Mealworms are even simpler to house than crickets. Place them in a smooth-walled plastic or cardboard container with holes in the top for proper ventilation. For substrate, use approximately 1" of Mealworm Bedding on top of and under the mealworms. Place the container in the refrigerator unless you plan to breed your mealworms.

Temperature & Lighting

Crickets should be kept at 75°-85°F. An incandescent light can be used as a heat source for 16 hours a day. Use a thermometer to monitor temperatures.

Mealworms should be kept in the fridge at 45°-50°F. This causes them to go inactive and stops development into the beetle stage. If you plan to breed them, they should be kept at 75°-80°F. Mealworms need no special lighting.

Food & Feeding

Crickets are omnivores, and the easiest way to make sure they are getting the nutrients they need is to feed a commercial cricket diet. You can also supplement that with fresh vegetables, such as potatoes and carrots. Feed them several times a week, and supplement their diet with vitamins and calcium. For a water source, use a damp sponge or paper towel. Don't use a water dish, as they could drown. There are some cricket diets available that feed, water, and gutload your crickets all at the same time, providing everything they need.

Mealworms will eat their bedding, so you do not need to purchase a special diet for them. However, you can add corn meal, bone meal, or other items to their bedding to make them more nutritious for your herp. Place a piece of carrot, ripe apple, overripe banana peel, or small pieces of orange on top of the bedding for moisture, and change it daily. Because they are inactive in the fridge, remove them once a week to allow them to warm up and eat.

Cleaning

Clean your cricket's faunarium once a week. Remove any dead crickets, casings, and all waste materials. Before putting in a new batch of crickets, clean and disinfect the enclosure with hot water and soap, making sure to rinse thoroughly.

Your mealworm container will need minimal cleaning. Sift the substrate every couple weeks to remove any dead mealworms, waste, and shed exoskeletons, and

Feeding your reptile

Crickets: Crickets can be placed directly in the enclosure, or, to reduce waste and encourage more natural feeding, use a decorative feeding stump. If you prefer not to handle the crickets, use a pair of Aquatic Forceps.

Mealworms: Mealworms should never be placed directly on the floor of the enclosure, as it will cause your reptile to ingest substrate. Instead,

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change when damp.

We Recommend

Live Farm Fresh Crickets

Farm Fresh Live Mealworms

Fluker's Mealworm Bedding

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Cricket Diet

put them in a Worm Dish. You can also feed them to your reptile using Forceps.

Both crickets and mealworms should be dusted with a calcium and vitamin supplement before being fed to your reptile.

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