

Breeding Your Own Feeder Insects: Superworms

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BREEDING SUPERWORMS

Superworms are the larval stage of the *Zoophobas mario* beetle. They are popular as feeder insects for larger reptiles because they are softer and easier to digest than mealworms. They are also known as King Worms, and they are easy to breed.

Housing

The container you keep your superworms in should be at least 5" high, and it should have smooth sides to keep the superworms from crawling out. The container should be easy to disinfect as needed, and it should allow for proper ventilation and air circulation. Some containers that people have used include faunariums, small glass aquariums, plastic boxes and tubs, and plastic food containers. You can use a screened lid, a plastic lid with a hole cut in it and covered with mesh, or you can leave the lid off entirely if the container is deep enough. Never use a tight lid that doesn't allow ventilation, as this will cause molding.

Superworms should never be housed in the fridge like mealworms. They should be kept at approximately 80° to 85° F.

Put about 3" of high quality, nutritious substrate in the habitat. Substrates you can use include oat bran, rolled oats, or wheat germ. Their substrate will act both as bedding and as food. For moisture, place a piece of fruit or vegetable on top of the substrate. Change it daily to prevent molding.

Never put a dish of water in the habitat. The substrate must stay dry, or harmful mold will form. Replace substrate about once every couple months, and remove dead beetles, worms, or pupae daily.

Breeding

To breed your own superworms, start with a colony of about 100 worms. Superworms can take a long time to pupate, but you can hurry the process along. Purchase small containers such as film canisters or small drawers from hardware containers, and punch a small hole in it. Put some substrate in the container, and put the container in a warm, dark place for about 10 days. The superworm will start to curl up and pupate. Once it turns into a pupae, remove it from the container and put it in a special enclosure. This will prevent the worms and beetles from nibbling on it and killing a potential breeder.

Once the pupae has turned into a beetle, put it into the breeding container. The beetles will breed until they die, and a female can produce up to 500 eggs during her lifetime. The eggs will stick to the substrate, so you won't be able to see them. Approximately one week after the egg is laid, it will hatch, and a tiny larva (superworm) will emerge.

Other than accelerating the change into a pupae, breeding superworms involves very little work on your part. You just need to maintain proper



living conditions and temperatures, keep the substrate clean, and provide a fresh piece of fruit or vegetable in the habitat for moisture.