

Keeping and Raising Mealworms

Last updated July, 10th, 2000

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Index

- [Regular or King mealworms](#)
- [Regular Mealworms - Tenibrio Molitor](#)
- [Keeping and Breeding Tenibrio](#)
- [Keeping and Breeding King \(Zophobas\) mealworms](#)
- [Suppliers](#)
- [Bug Books](#)
- [Recommended Reptile and Amphibian Books](#)
- [How to contact me](#)

Regular or King mealworms

I decided to create this page because I'm often asked how to keep and breed regular and king mealworms. The following information is a compilation of how I keep and breed these insects, and how others have told me that they keep and breed these insects.

You may ask "Why would anyone want to keep, let alone breed, mealworms?" Well when you consider that both regular and king mealworms are very easy to keep, and that most species of reptiles or amphibians will eat them, then it just simply makes sense that you would want to keep some on hand to feed your herps, and if you are successful at breeding them you might just save yourself a lot of money too. :)

Regular Mealworms - Tenibrio Molitor

I call them regular mealworms, you may just call them mealworms, but if you really want to be sure that we are talking of the same type of insect- lets call them by their Latin name- ***Tenebrio Molitor***.

The larvae of the Tenebrio is most commonly used to feed to a wide variety of reptiles and amphibians, and birds kept in captivity. You can purchase Tenebrio in the pet store or by mail order. The larvae are about an inch long, and they are a golden yellow colour.

Mealworms are the larvae of the darkling beetle. Darkling beetles undergo complete metamorphosis, and have an egg, larva, pupa and beetle stage. The female beetle lays 500 to 1000 bean shaped white eggs. These are seldom seen because they are sticky and rapidly become coated in substrate. Eggs hatch in about one week but the larva are very small so it may take a few weeks before the larvae are large enough to be seen well. As a larva grows it moults several times- shedding its exoskeleton. After a period of approx 3 months the larvae eventually becomes a pupa. The pupa stage lasts about two weeks.

The beetle that eventually emerges from the pupa is a light beige, darkening to red, brown, and finally black after about two days.

Keeping and Breeding Tenebrio

When you purchase Tenebrio from the pet store you may be instructed to keep them in the refrigerator. You may do this if you like- but the growth of the larvae will slow down and you will likely never be able to breed the mealworms while they are in the fridge. :) Also, if the mealworms are kept at room temperature they will eat, and if you feed them a good diet you can be sure that your pet is getting a nutritious meal when you feed him the mealworms. :)

Here is how I keep and breed mine:

1. shallow tupperware or rubbermaid container
2. Put lots of air holes in the lid, or cut out a large portion of the lid and use a hot glue gun to glue some fine window screening material to the inside of the lid around the hole.
3. Fill the bottom of the container with a substrate of rolled oats or bran- couple of inches deep. The mealworms will eat this.
4. Put one small shallow dishes in the bottom of the container - I use the tiny tinfoil pie plates. Fill these dishes with a half potato, a chunk of carrot and if you like a 1/4 to a 1/2 of an orange. Other veggies can be used- they will eat these and get their moisture from them so you may want to also sprinkle the veggies and fruit with calcium and vitamin supplements so that the mealworms will be a wonderful healthy meal for your dragon. :)
5. Change the veggies every couple of days- they will go bad and mould- mould and dampness will kill the mealworms.
6. The Tenebrio will eat and live for a long time in these containers when kept at room temperature. Eventually you will notice that some of the mealworms metamorphosize into pupa, and the pupa into beetles. The beetles will mate and lay eggs in the substrate or on a porous piece of wood in the container. They will cycle themselves with little help or bother from you. All you have to do is feed them.



Keeping and breeding (Zophobas) King Mealworms

Keeping King mealworms is very similar to keeping Tenebrio at room temperature. Please follow items 1-5 as above except that if you will be keeping large quantities of mealworms on hand you may want to use a deeper tupperware or rubbermaid container. :)

Breeding them is, however, a different story. :)

Here is how I breed mine:

1. If you would like to have a modest supply of Zophobas around that you have bred yourself select 10 mealworms from your stock. you may select more or less if you like- but I would use a minimum of 6 to begin with as they don't always survive.
2. Collect film containers, pill bottles or other similar small lidded containers . Puncture several small holes in each lid, and fill each container half full with bran.
3. Place one king mealworm in each container and close the lid securely.
4. Place the containers in a warm area- preferably an area that stays at about 80F most of the time. I used a bread box over my fridge.
5. Check the containers at least once a week. If the mealworm is inactive and is straight it is probably dead. Remove any dead mealworms that you find and replace them with new ones. After the first or second week you will see that the mealworms have become inactive and curled up in a ball. This is fine. They have begun to metamorphisize.
6. By the second or third week most of the mealworms should have turned into large white pupa. The pupa will not move much, but it will wiggle when touched or disturbed.
7. Between the third and fourth week the pupae will morph into large beetles. The beetles are white when they first emerge but quickly turn pink, reddish brown then black within the first 24 to 36 hours. check your containers daily between the 3rd and 4th weeks.
8. Place the beetles in their own tupperware container (as described above) with bran for substrate, a small dish of fresh veggies, and a piece of porous wood (cork bark?) on which they can lay their eggs. Keep the beetles in a warm (high 70's to low 80's F) room for best results.
9. The beetles will begin to lay eggs within the first couple of weeks.
10. After approximately a month of keeping the beetles you will begin to notice microscopic mealworms (larvae) amongst the bran.
11. Within two months after creating your beetles you will have a number of half size and full size mealworms in the container. You can put your mealworms in a separate container once they are large enough to be easily seen and picked from the substrate.

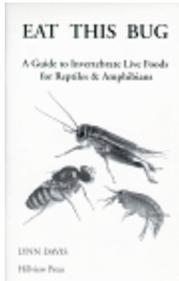


Suppliers

Here is a link to a web site that lists cricket suppliers The information is organized in table form and it's very easy to compare prices, shipping charges, and other ordering information. Mealworms, superworms, etc. are also listed. is: [Mail- order insect suppliers.](#)



Bug Books



[Eat This Bug : A Guide to Invertebrate Live Foods for Reptiles and Amphibians by Lynn Davis](#)

This book is a guide for owners of reptiles and amphibians who feed insects and other live foods to their pets. Advice is offered for selecting , ordering and raising your own supply of live invertebrate foods. More than a dozen species of live foods are discussed. The book includes instructions on keeping cultures of insects, and recipes & diets for insects.



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NOTE: If your reptile or amphibian is ill, or appears to be suffering from some type of ailment *please take it to a reptile vet and get the proper treatment for it.* I am not a vet, and while you may write to me about your reptile or amphibians health, I may or may not be able to give advice on care prior to or after medical attention ... but I'm no substitute for proper medical attention. :) Please see a reptile vet if you are concerned for your reptile. If money is an issue- talk to the vet about a payment plan or about postdated cheques- many veterinarians will work with you if you are low on funds.

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