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RAISING WHITE WORMS

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White worms are one of the easiest live foods to raise. They're a good source of protein and take up very little space. Many live foods are hard to obtain, especially in winter months. White worms reproduce very rapidly, and a good culture can keep you in live food all year long.

A flat-bottom container will be best for raising your worms. I find that a plastic shoe box is ideal. You could also utilize that old slate-bottom tank. The cover should be loose-fitting, with many air holes. Ventilation is very important for a healthy culture.

The culture medium should be composed of 50% black dirt and 50% peat moss. This mixture will hold more moisture and prevent your medium from clumping. It is very important that your soil is free from any chemical fertilizer. Keep the culture medium wet, but not so wet that water accumulates at the bottom. Keep your culture in a cool place, 55° to 70°. Mine are kept in the basement on the floor during the summer months and off the floor during the winter. It is important not to keep your white worms too cool, or they will not reproduce as fast, and may go into dormancy. The culture medium should have a 50% change every six months to a year. As in aquariums, the soil in which white worms live can also become polluted.

Feeding your worms is very easy. Flake fish food is a popular choice, as is bread soaked in milk. Baby cereal is also very good. I feed mine rabbit pellets or the powder left from the fish food that I make. They eat almost anything, so experiment to find what works best for you.

There are three ways of collecting that I've used. The first is to pick the worms out of the medium with a tweezers. This method, unless you're involved in measured feedings, is very slow. The second way is to construct a wood frame and stretch a piece of window screen around it. Rest the frame on a bucket with a small amount of water in the bottom. Put a clump of worm-filled dirt on the screen and spread it out as evenly as possible. Then suspend a light bulb over the dirt. The dirt will heat up and the worms will crawl through the screen and fall into the bucket. Although this method takes a while, because it takes time for the dirt to heat up, large numbers of worms can be collected at one time. The third way of collecting--the one that I use-- is to put some worm-filled dirt into a margarine container or reasonable facsimile. Add some lukewarm water to the dirt until it is just covered. Then put the container somewhere warm. The warm spot on your aquarium light is a good place. Soon the worms will crawl up the sides of the container. Just scrape them off with your finger and feed them to your fish.