



## The Basics Of Keeping Meal Worms

Mealworms are the larvae of the darkling beetle. They are often used as food or treats for reptiles, large fish, poultry and many native animals. They are also used as food for humans in some countries and are a good source of protein. They can be easily grown at home but due to their long life cycle they are better for people who want to use small amounts of worms over a longer period of time rather than large amounts over a short period.

- Eggs can take between 4 and 20 days to hatch (usually less than 10)
- Larvae take about 10 weeks to grow to full size
- Pupa will take between 6 and 24 days for metamorphosis
- Beetles live from 8 to 12 weeks and will usually lay eggs at about 12 days

The length of life cycle depends a lot on temperature and how much they are fed. Meal worms will become almost dormant in the cold.

They are easy and cheap to keep. Anything with plastic or glass sides can be used as an enclosure as long as the beetles can't climb the sides and escape. Ice cream containers, plastic storage containers, plastic drawers and fish tanks are all good enclosures. The container should be filled with a generous amount of bran, for the worms to live in and eat. Rolled oats can also be added.

The life stages don't need to be separated, but it can help increase population numbers since the beetles are prone to eating their own eggs. The beetles can also bite, so it's a good idea to move them with a spoon or scoop instead of hands.

Feeding meal worms is the cheapest part about keeping them. They eat the bran in their tank but they still need a source of moisture; kitchen scraps!

- Potato peelings (these are best)
- Pumpkin peelings (not as good as other food)
- Carrot peelings
- Apple peelings or cores
- Sweet potato peelings or slices
- Pear peelings or cores