

Superworm

Zophobas morio

By Cody Castellanos

General Information:

Superworms (*Zophobas morio*) are a 2" long larva that is a very popular feeder for reptiles. Because of their size and movement they'll easily catch the attention of your animals. They are naturally large and have no growth hormones unlike the giant mealworm. They are native to tropical Central and South America. The total life span for a superworm is a little over a year from egg to beetle.



Housing:

They can be placed in any container that you may have. Make sure that the container is high enough so they can't climb out. Usually tubs 5"+ high is sufficient. I've found that plastic Rubbermaid tubs usually work best.

Heat & Light - Lighting is not needed as they like darkness. The best temperatures are in the mid 70s to the low 80s. If superworms are overheated you will notice a significant die off. Also never refrigerate superworms! They can't take cold temperatures and death will be the result.

Food & Water:

Superworms will eat just about anything. Keep them in 1-4" of wheat bran, oats or a highly nutritious gutload. Make sure to gutload all food items for 24 hours prior to feeding. Gutloading is feeding very nutritious/high quality foods to prey prior to feeding to your animals. There are also many commercially available products that are in powder form. I make and use Pro Gutload for all my feeders. Gutloading will ensure a healthier insect and in the long run a healthier animal.

Water - Things like carrots, potatoes, fruits etc are all suitable for moisture. Not only is it a source of moisture these items also double as food. A sign of not enough moisture will be when the superworms result to cannibalism.

Maintenance:

Not a lot of maintenance is required for superworms. Just make sure that they are given enough moisture. The bedding will also need changed on a regular basis when it becomes fine and sandy looking. Sift the worms out and give them new bedding.

Breeding:

Breeding superworms is very similar to that of mealworms but with a few differences. One difference is the worms will need to be placed individually so they can pupate. If you keep all the worms together you will never get beetles to start another generation. The larva will become large enough to start the "morphing" process at about 5 months of age. Choose the largest worms you have and place a single



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worm into an empty 35mm film container. I've found film containers work best as they require very little space. Leave the worm in the empty film container with no food.

If you see the worms curled up the metamorphosis process is underway. If the worm is straight looking or black then it is probably dead. This process will take 1-2 weeks to occur.

The worm below has finished the metamorphosis process and has pupated. It's now in its 3rd stage of life. Leave the pupae in the film container and in another 1-2 weeks it will turn into a beetle.

Now the film container holds a beetle. Place all the beetles together in their own fresh container. Offer them potatoes, carrots and fruits for moisture as you would for the larva. About every 2 weeks remove the beetles from the bedding and place them in a fresh container. This allows the eggs to hatch and further your chances of getting more worms. If the beetles are left they will prey on the eggs and possibly the newly hatched larva. Do this rotation on a regular 2 week basis.

Eggs and Babies - The eggs are very tiny white dots. They will start to hatch within a few weeks but you won't notice them for about a month because of their tiny size. Newly hatched babies seem to die if they are kept too hot so the mid to high 70s is ideal.

Conclusion:

Superworms are a very popular food item for reptiles. With less chitin (exoskeleton) than the common mealworm they are easier for your animal to digest. With time and patients you can raise all your own superworms.

