

## Building a Mealworm Habitat

### GETTING STARTED

#### Rearing Habitat

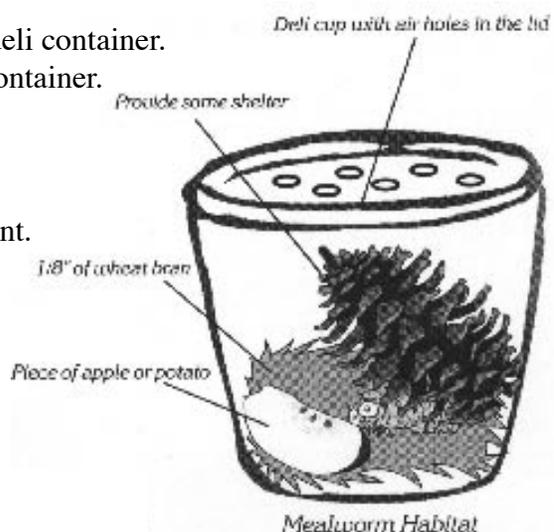
- A clear plastic cup with a cover, or a margarine tub or deli container.
- 1/8" wheat bran or crushed wheat flakes in bottom of container.
- A crumpled piece of paper, pinecone or empty film canister and a piece of apple or potato (replace before it becomes moldy).
- Small air holes in the lid, since a dry climate is important.

#### Food

Wheat bran, crushed wheat flakes, oatmeal and a piece of apple or potato.

#### Water

Mealworms do not need water. They will obtain all of the water they need from the piece of potato or apple.



### CARE AND HANDLING TECHNIQUES

#### Handling

To pick up a mealworm, use a plastic spoon or a folded 3"x5" card to scoop it up. If you choose to pick it up with your fingers, use your thumb and forefinger on either side of the worm and gently squeeze. Use a firm hold, since they are very smooth and may squirm and wiggle the tip of their abdomens. When holding mealworms, keep your hand over the container or table to avoid dropping the mealworm on the floor.

#### Raising Young

Mealworms are very easy to rear in the classroom. The larvae grow to 25 mm before pupating. After pupating, the adults emerge in two to three weeks. In seven to ten days, the females may lay eggs. In about fourteen days, the eggs hatch and the larvae begin to eat and develop.

#### Additional Information

Mealworms will not bite. Dead mealworms are stiff and dark brown and should be removed from the container. Provide plenty of room for the large mealworms since they will eat each other in a constrained container. Small mealworms can be stored in a container on a refrigerator door shelf for several weeks to delay pupation or to extend their lives.