

# Culturing Whiteworms

ANGFA Victoria

Information Sheet 4

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## Key Advantage

This is an easy to propagate, nutritious & well received food for most fish. Ideal size for fish from a few centimetres up to adults of even the larger species as the culture will contain worms of many ages & sizes. Cultures last many months if looked after and new ones can be easily started. Some have concerns over the 'fattiness' of the worms, however I feel this is more to do with their white colour rather than their nutritional profile and they should never be fed as the sole diet anyway!

## What you will need (as a minimum)

1. Wooden boxes are the classic approach, however smaller (e.g. 29cm wide, x 38cm long x 15 cm high) polystyrene foam boxes can be used. These have the advantage of insulating the worms from rapid temperature fluctuations as the worms are very sensitive to warm temperatures (better well under 22<sup>o</sup> C)
2. Compost from the hardware, without added fertiliser! Eg Richgro or composted sugarcane mulch.
3. Fine (not powdered) activated carbon granules, coral or coarse dolomite sand.
4. A suitably sized cover glass (about 5-8 cm smaller than the internal dimensions of the box)
5. Bread or breadcrumbs (I find white bread superior to wholemeal or whole grain)
6. Cat biscuits (ideally kitten food as it is higher in protein) or animal vitamin supplement (as used for reptiles)
7. A starter culture of Whiteworms (occasionally available from the trade table of ANGFA Victoria)
8. A system. Most people who lose their cultures do so because there isn't a regular maintenance pattern!

## The process

1. Mix the compost, activated carbon and sand in an 80:10:10 ration & moisten it so it is damp, but not wet. No moisture should be expressed if a handful is squeezed but the compost should hold together & not crumble.
2. Place about 3cm of the compost mixture in the bottom of the fish box.
3. Make a depression in the centre of the compost and place the starter culture in it
4. Mix some breadcrumbs into a soft paste, not too sloppy, add a few drops of multivitamins if available and stir in.
5. Add some of the prepared food (about a half teaspoon to start) onto the starter culture
6. Place cover glass over the worms.
7. Replace lid firmly
8. Store in a cool (15-18 C) & preferably dimly lit place, eg under the house.
9. Check daily & add food if needed, increasing the amount as the worms multiply.
10. Ensure worms do not go more than 1 or 2 days maximum without food as this slows down the culture.

**Harvesting:** Once the worms start to mass together they can be picked out with tweezers in lumps and fed straight to the fish, no need to rinse. Alternatively they can be picked or scooped up with a damp, firm-bristle brush from the sides of the container and again fed directly into your tanks

**Maintenance:** Keep the culture cool, propagate a new box every 3-4 weeks & have as many as you need on the go at any one time to ensure a regular supply of worms and to prevent total loss if you have a disaster! Use moistened kitten biscuits instead of breadcrumbs about every fifth feed, remove if not eaten within a day or if they go mouldy.

**Further Information:** Attend an ANGFA VIC meeting and ask an ANGFA member for practical tips on all sorts of worms. Meetings held the 1<sup>st</sup> Friday every second month starting February. Or go to [www.angfavic.org](http://www.angfavic.org)