

## Red Worms

**Bonus content from the December 2009 AFI magazine column "Freshwater Q&A."**

*By Mike Wickham*

Q. I've seen advertisements for red worms as a food for fish. I'd like to know more about them — in particular whether they are a good food for all freshwater fish and the frequency of feeding them. In the past, I've fed my fish white worms about once a week, but the worm culture died off, and now I'd like to start a worm culture again.

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A. Red worms (*Lumbricus rubellus*) are a great food for fish — as a treat or for bringing fish into breeding condition. Some fish are large enough to eat the worms whole, but you'll have to chop them for feeding to small community species.

Breeding red worms is easy. Set up a container with soil 8 to 12 inches deep; I've found a cheap plastic kids' wading pool to work well. Use garden loam, not sandy soil or clay. Soil should be damp throughout but not wet. Place it in a cool spot, probably the basement (if you have one). Covering the surface with wet burlap helps keep in moisture.

Worms eat decaying vegetable matter. All kinds of things can be used for food. You can crumble up dead leaves from the yard, add vegetable waste from the dinner table, or offer dry foods like oatmeal and chicken feed.

Seed your culture with worms from the garden, bait store or worm farm. In a few weeks, you'll have a neverending supply.

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