

Vinegar Eel Basics

Vinegar Eels, or eelworms are a small, free-living, non-parasitic roundworm that is adapted to living in a low pH (acidic) medium. They are easy to culture and require little attention. Due to their small size (they are even smaller than microworms) they are ideal food for even the smallest baby fish (fry). As with microworms, they are a useful standby for that unexpected batch of fry.

Checklist

- Wide mouth 500ml glass or plastic jar with cover (air holes)
- Cider vinegar or Balsamic vinegar
- Starter culture
- Apple juice or small piece of apple (optional)
- Heat pad

Setting up

Fill jar with vinegar and add vinegar eel culture. The worms will concentrate at the surface of the liquid where the oxygen concentration is highest. A jar with a wide mouth and large surface area is therefore preferable to one with a narrow neck and a smaller surface area.

Maintenance

Cultures should be kept at 20-30°C. Periodically adding a small amount of apple juice or a small piece of apple to the culture tends to increase the populations of worms but is not essential. Every 6-8 weeks worms will need to be subcultured to a fresh medium using the above method.

Harvesting

Worms should be ready to harvest in 7-10 days. A number of collection methods can be used.

1. The most common method (although not necessarily the easiest) is to pour or siphon the culture through coarse coffee filter paper.
2. Another method is to use a culture jar that has thread on the inside, or to roughen up the inside of the culture container with sandpaper to create vertical lines. Ensure the culture medium covers the bottom thread, or roughened areas. As the worms naturally swim upward, they will collect in the threads and grooves above the level of the liquid and can easily be collected using an eyedropper or fine paint brush.

Feeding

After collecting, rinse filter paper or worms in a jar of aquarium water before pouring into feeding tank (a syringe makes it easy to portion out the worms). *This step is extremely important as you do not want any of the culture solution in your fish tanks.* The worms can live for a long time in an aquarium, but care should still be taken not to over feed.

Tips

- The worms must be grown in medium (such as natural cider vinegar) that has not been chemically treated which can inhibit the growth of bacteria or yeast upon which the worms feed.
- Vinegar can be either pure or diluted with water (up to 1:5)

Feel free to contact the friendly staff at Boronia Aquarium for further information



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www.scotia-aquatics.co.uk

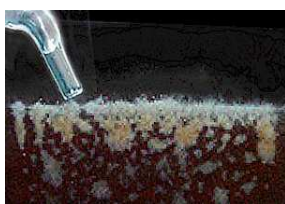


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