

# Earthworms & Redworms

## Earthworms (nightcrawlers)

**Species:** *terrestris*

**Genus:** *Lumbricus*

**Family:** Lumbricidae

**Order:** Haplotaxida

**Class:** Oligochaeta

**Phylum:** Annelida

**Kingdom:** Animalia

## Redworms

**Species:** *calliginosa*

**Genus:** *Alloloborpha*

**Family:** Lumbricidae

**Order:** Haplotaxida

**Class:** Oligochaeta

**Phylum:** Annelida

**Kingdom:** Animalia



## Conditions for Customer Ownership

We hold permits allowing us to transport these organisms. To access permit conditions, [click here](#).

**Never purchase living specimens without having a disposition strategy in place.**

There are currently no USDA permits required for this organism. In order to protect our environment, never release a live laboratory organism into the wild.

## Primary Hazard Considerations

Earthworms do not pose any hazard considerations for handlers, although it is recommended to wash your hands after handling.

## Availability

Earthworms are available year round. There are no seasonal shortages. All of our earthworms and redworms are farmed. Our earthworms are shipped in waxed, paper containers with soil as their substrate, a moist paper towel may be used to retain moisture during shipment. We over-pack each order of worms. It is normal to have some deceased worms in the container. You will receive at least the quantity of live worms stated on the container. *Lumbricus* (or earthworms) can be maintained for short periods of time (two weeks) by keeping them in a refrigerator in containers of soil. They must be kept moist, but not wet. The container should be covered to prevent escape, yet still allow for air exchange. A deceased earthworm will not show any signs of movement or constriction when picked up.

## Captive Care

### Habitat:

Earthworms can be kept in any container that keeps them cool, moist, and allows for air exchange, and preferably in the dark. Use a rich organic soil as a substrate and sprinkle cornmeal on the surface for food. It should be kept moist, but without pooled water. Although earthworms can withstand heat, direct sunlight will quickly dry out your earthworms and their bedding. It is recommended for long-term storage to incorporate new soil. Every week or two, you should turn the soil to increase oxygen content at lower depths.

## Information

**Method of Reproduction:** Earthworms are hermaphrodites (both male and female reproductive organs within the same organism) but reproduce sexually. The mating pair overlap front ends ventrally and each exchanges sperm with the other. The fertilized eggs are in an egg case (formed by the clitellum, the wide segment near the anterior end) that slips off the worm and is left in the soil. Eggs are laid about once a month.

## Life Cycle

The eggs hatch after about three weeks. About 5–10 small worms emerge per cocoon. They become sexually mature in 4–12 months and can live 6–10 years.

## ***Wild Habitat***

Nightcrawlers and other common earthworms range through most of the northern hemisphere, from temperate to sub-arctic regions. They are found in soils that are rich in organic material. They consume mostly leaf litter and other decomposing organic material. They are preyed upon by many birds, toads, and rodents.

## ***Disposition***

- We do not recommend releasing any laboratory animal into the wild.
- Adoption is the preferred disposition for any living animal.
- If the worms must be euthanized at the end of study, put them into a container or bag and freeze for 48 hours.
- A deceased specimen should be disposed of as soon as possible. Consult your school's recommended procedures for disposal. In general, dead worms should be handled as little as possible or with gloves, wrapped in an opaque plastic bag that is sealed (tied tightly) before being placed in a general garbage container away from students.