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CULTURING BEAN WEEVILS (*Callosobruchus maculatus*)

Equipment required:

- Bean Weevil Starter Culture
- Ventilated culturing container
- Dried black-eyed beans

Bean weevils (sometimes called cowpea beetles) are a species of bruchid beetle that can make an excellent alternative to fruit flies as a livefood. They can be used with dartfrogs, bufoids, other small amphibians, mantids, spiders and even carnivorous plants.

The weevils lay their eggs on the beans and the larvae bury inside the beans, where they stay and develop, until emerging as adults. The cycle then continues with new adults mating and laying eggs on beans in the culture.

They are easily cultured given the right conditions and are a good back-up culture to have in the event of a fruit fly culture crash.

Pre-made ventilated, fruit fly culturing containers such as the one pictured are ideal but you can make your own with plastic pint glasses (with a lid made from kitchen paper or tights secured with an elastic band).

The starter cultures should contain a number of adult weevils as well as beans containing larvae and/or eggs.

Split this starter culture, including any adult weevils, between two containers and on top of these beans you can add a further 1-2cm of fresh beans on which emerging adults will lay.

A piece of kitchen towel folded a few times is placed in the culture on which adult weevils will climb (making harvesting adults easier).

Seal the culture lid and place somewhere warm (generally 25 -28°C is perfect), an airing cupboard or on top of a heated vivarium are ideal. Within a month the culture should have increased explosively (at room temperature this can take much longer).

Generally a culture contains enough beans to support 3 generations of breeding but they can be split after each generation. These weevils can fly so take care when splitting cultures.