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# FACT SHEET

## WORM FARMING

- The management and breeding of worms is known as VERMICULTURE
- Worms are one of nature's ultimate recyclers
- They can live for a long time (15 years or more)
- They have both male and female reproductive organs
- They can be bred easily at home or at school
- They can be used to recycle organic waste from your kitchen into valuable fertiliser
- They produce castings (worm poo!) which have a neutral pH
- Their castings increase the amount of nutrient available to your plants by up to 10 times.
- Their castings increase crop and pasture yields
- They increase the level of essential microbial activity in the soil
- They can consume their own body weight in food every day
- They double in population every 2-3 months in ideal conditions
- A mature compost worm can produce an egg capsule every 7-10 days in ideal conditions.
- Worm eggs can survive in difficult situations for quite a time.
- When handling worm castings you should always wear gloves because acid in human skin makes eggs infertile.

### Which Worms Are For You?

There are about 350 species of earthworms in Australia, with many different habits. So it is important to make sure you have the right earthworms for your application. The CSIRO has described the broad categories of earthworms as:

**Composters** - composting organic wastes, reared for fish bait, and production of soil conditioner.

**Earthworkers** - live 'free' in the soil, improve soil conditions and promote plant growth.

The type of worm which you need to get started in a worm factory are the 'composters'. Tigers, and Reds are the most common 'composters' and are not normally found in the soil. They survive only in an organic-rich environment where moisture is maintained throughout the year. These worms are not suited to soils and should be kept 'in captivity', where food and moisture are carefully controlled.

'Composters' in your Worm Factory will produce worm manure called castings or vermicompost which can be used in your garden as a soil improver. For example, in pots as an additive to potting mixture, around plants as a top dress fertilizer, or as an additive to seed raising mixes.

Worms are nature's own recyclers, converting your kitchen scraps and garden waste, not only for free, but in the process creating a nutrient-rich plant food.

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