
Population Decline from 3 LBS to 100 worms

Posted by Scott - 2009/11/01 13:33

If anyone can help? I started about 7 months ago now with 3lbs of red worms, I have the Can-O-Worms system that has multi level trays. Today i was going through the first level and only found about 50-75 worms and probably over 500 cocoons and i took about 100 cocoons out to see if i could hatch them faster because my population of worms is gone. I put on the second level on about 3 months ago because the first level got to full and the first level has no food left in it but still some old coco bedding. I am just not sure what happened to thousands of red worms? Also if someone knows a way to hatch cocoons fast that would be a great help. thanks.

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Re:Population Decline from 3 LBS to 100 worms

Posted by Ikittle - 2009/11/02 07:33

Hi Scott; All you have to do to hatch the cocoons a little quicker is get the temp up to around 75 deg f and that is about optimim. They can be left in what ever they are in and the hatched will have food to eat just cover with dry news paper shreds that are long strips so you can rake them out of the way to inspect.

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Re:Population Decline from 3 LBS to 100 worms

Posted by wellsworms - 2009/11/02 13:23

from lack of food they just faded away i hav had the same problem here.

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Re:Population Decline from 3 LBS to 100 worms

Posted by cathd - 2009/11/02 14:15

I'd agree with ikittle- leave them where they are- worm cocoons are more fragile than they look- I've found too much handling reduces the number of hatchlings you will eventually get. And try to make sure the temperature is warm enough for hatching.

A simple trick to get the temperature up, and promote hatching, would be to put some food and bedding in the tray above the one where the cocoons are at the moment. As the food rots it will heat up and the cocoons will become aware of the decomposition/ raised temperatures and hatch to find the new food. If you can get hold of some part composted horse manure- you'll really get them going!

The die off may just have been because you got a batch of worms which were all the same age, and they died off naturally (some breeders send 'spent' breeding worms when selling), or conditions may have become unhealthy for them. Examples of conditions which might precipitate die off:

Too dry, too wet, no food, too much food (the food uses up all the air as it rots, goes anaerobic and stinky and worms leave home or die. Not enough ventilation.

Also check out your drip tray- make sure you don't have a smelly mass of suicide worms dead down there.

I always place a weed mebrane between my bottom layer and the drip tray to stop escapees. It also means that I can leave the tap open with something under it to catch the leachate and thus get a better airflow through the trays.

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Re:Population Decline from 3 LBS to 100 worms

Posted by Scott - 2009/11/02 22:17

Thanks everyone for some good information, the cocoons i will differently be trying to get them to hatch at the 75 degree temp to see how well it works.

also one thing that got mentioned was lack of food and i am not sure how that could happen when the system i use has layers where the worms can travel up or down from layer to layer, and i put about 6lbs a week of left over food scraps for the worms. The only thing i could think of is the system being to wet because i do water it once a week and still then it has good drainage. I do believe it could have been the age of the worms or the "spent" worms as cathd mentioned, when

i received the worms they were all about the same size and pretty big, and that might be the reason i got some many cocoons, because they were breeder size already.

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Re:Population Decline from 3 LBS to 100 worms

Posted by Swimmus - 2009/11/20 18:41

One other possibility that i have encountered is that the worms have a natural tendenancy to wander. If you leave them in a dark place with any ability to squeeze out, they will. Not a population die off, a population immigration.

Just a possibility.

Recently had an indoor bin that had a lid on it but no light and population decreased significantly, never smalled a dead worm though. Finally put it out with the others and a few days later found about 100 balled up in a closet of the same room.

Makes you go hmmm.:)

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