

# Guppy Food

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Infusoria

Water, which to us appears crystal-clear, when observed through a microscope is seen to be teeming with a wide variety of tiny living organisms. Although we cannot see them with our naked eye, the guppy sees them, eats them and thrives on them.

It is for that reason that infusoria (tiny plant, animals or forms having characteristics of both) is ideal as a food for small fry. In summer, unless there is a severe dry spell, ditch water is found everywhere filled with infusoria; in winter it may be cultivated. Infusoria thrive on decaying vegetable matter. Some alfalfa hay with its fairly high protein content, decaying lettuce, and plenty of sun or artificial light makes a culture quickly. As portions of this green water are poured into a tank, the opaque material is seen to diffuse into the clear tank water and the fry appear to attack it. Obviously what we cannot see in detail is either visible to the fry or they find it "with their noses."

Many people make nets of thin muslin and go infusoria collecting, but in reality it's much easier just to "grow you own" at home. Once you have an infusoria culture started, you can use it to "seed" your next batch. In summer you can set tubs in your back yard to breed infusoria, and in the winter use flat pans on window sills with a southern exposure where sunlight strikes them most of the day. There is probably no better starter food for guppy fry than infusoria. Be careful though. If allowed to stand too long without proper care, the odor may become quite objectionable. The culture is ready to be used long before it reaches that stage of "ripeness." TOP Baby Brine Shrimp

Guppies of any age relish baby brine shrimp. The brown roundish tiny eggs may be purchased in any tropical fish store, but it is much more economical to purchase them in one pound cans if you have any fairly large size breeding operation. Hatching brine shrimp is a fairly easy process and requires a minimal investment in time and money. There are a few very important things to keep in mind about feeding your guppies, especially fry, large amounts of baby brine shrimp. There is definitely a "too much of a good thing" factor in doing so. In my experience, feeding a diet too high in baby brine shrimp has the opposite effect of a proper ratio of their quantity in your guppy's diet. Baby brine shrimp are extremely high in protein and very little else. Over feeding them can result in stunted growth of guppy fry.

Also, when and how you choose to feed them to your fish is very important. I never make baby brine shrimp the first meal of the day for my guppies. If fed as the first meal of the day they have a tendency to gorge themselves which can result in intestinal binding. I always feed flake food, high in vegetable content as my first meal of the day. Since my guppies are hungry in the morning there is less likelihood that they will turn their noses up at it. I will use baby brine shrimp as the second or third meal of the day, depending on the age of the fish, and again, I will always follow it with more high vegetable content flake food. This assures a well rounded diet containing the proper amounts of animal and vegetable ingredients needed to assure the health of your guppies, and the sandwiching of the brine shrimp with flake food keeps the intestinal track moving without binding up your fish. TOP

## Micro Worms

The next larger live food useful in feeding the guppy fry is the microworm. It is just large enough to be visible. These small worms were introduced to the world from Sweden. The females are about one-twelfth of an inch long; males a little smaller. The female bears about fifteen live young at a time which mature in a few days. They grow in many media; a mixture of bread and yeast kept almost liquid and inoculated with a starter culture will soon be teeming with these whitish creatures. It is best to maintain them in a covered glass jar with smooth sides as they tend to crawl up the sides of the container when the population in the medium becomes too dense, and they then can be scraped off with a knife blade and fed to your fish by dipping the blade into the aquarium water. Guppy fry generally have to be trained to eat them, but once they learn the taste, they eat them with relish and grow very well on them as part of their diet. TOP

## Daphnia

It may amaze some guppy breeders to read that many top experts do not regard the daphnia the best guppy food. Many use them as a large part of their diet regimen. The commercial sources for live daphnia have all but disappeared and are quite expensive when you do find them. They do not live long and must be fed to your fishes as soon as you get them home. Daphnia exhaust the oxygen from their containers and need to be kept cold and thus inactive if they are to live as long as possible without food. Most stores now sell frozen daphnia, but in my experience you wind up paying for a lot of ice and not much daphnia. I'd avoid it. Raising daphnia is not a very difficult thing to do and, it's a lot of fun. There are many commercial sources of daphnia starter kits which can be found in the classified section of any tropical fish magazine.

There are about 50 different species of daphnia but the two most common and most appropriate for feeding to your guppies are daphnia magna which is many times larger than the smallest species and daphnia pulex, which is the most common.

One word of warning! Do not put a heavy feeding of daphnia into a tank of guppy fry. The daphnia not only tend to exhaust the oxygen supply from the water, but they also eat the infusoria that the fry need to maintain proper health and growth. TOP

### Mosquito Larvae

Mosquitoes throughout the spring, summer, and fall lay eggs on the surface of any water they can find, especially water which has some decomposing organic matter in it. The eggs are deposited in tiny rafts and hatch into small wigglers which develop in a few days into sizeable dark-brown larvae - a prime delicacy for mature guppies. For small fry, it is advantageous to collect the rafts which can be found floating on stagnant water. If these little rafts, which contain larvae, are left floating in the fry tank, the fish will consume the tiny larvae as soon as the latter hatch and swim downward in the tank.

Wigglers come to the water's surface and stay there breathing through a tube pushed up into the air. The slightest jar or disturbance will send them scuttling downward. To collect the larvae it is necessary to plunge a net in and scoop them up before they have had a chance to dart downward. Mosquito larvae stand crowding in a container because they are not dependent on the oxygen in the water. On the other hand, it never pays to catch more than one's Guppies can eat in a day or two because if they are not promptly fed to them, the larvae will turn into mosquitoes and you will have a room filled with flying, blood-sucking pests. Again, frozen mosquito larvae are available commercially, but you'll get more ice than mosquito larvae so I just don't feel that this is an economical way to obtain this treat for your guppies. TOP

### Tubificid Worms

**CAUTION! Feed Tubifex worms to you guppies at great risk!**

These worms, for sale in most all fish supply stores are common residents of fresh and brackish water. They live in tubes in mud in either still or running water, sometimes in such quantities as to form reddish patches on the mud where they wave their hind-ends in the water. The usual species used by hobbyists is *Tubifex tubifex*, a worm of about 60 segments and about one and a third inches long. However, of the Tubificidae there are about 133 known species, several of which can be useful as guppy food. *Tubifex tubifex* can sometimes be found in large numbers in shallow water below a sewer, and this of course is where the danger in feeding them to your fish originates.

A good many so-called tubifex worms are actually not of the tubifex genus, but are *Limnodrilus* of which about 28 species are known. Very little preference is shown by guppies for one over the other. Both are members of the Tubificidae family for which reason it has been suggested that they be discussed them under the appellation of tubificids, not tubifex.

Here's the bottom line on feeding these creatures to your guppies. Nothing, and I'll say it again, nothing puts size on a guppy faster than regular feeding of tubifex worms. Guppies attack and devour them as if they were possessed. There's very few sights like watching a two week old guppy wrestling with a tubie twice as long as he is. It really is something to watch. I used them for years, and as long as there's no problem, well, no problem. Every so often you will get a batch of worms that has the potential to completely wipe out your fish room, virtually overnight. It's not a pretty sight. Tubifex worms carry bacterial, protozoal and nematode diseases and should not be used as guppy food,

## White Worms

Many small worms are white but what has come to be called white worms by fish enthusiasts belong to the genus *Enchytraeus*, of which there are about 40 species. *E. albidus* is one of the best. In Europe and America, this is a common worm. It is found in the U.S. from Maine to New Jersey along the seashore near the high-water mark. Sometimes a nice lot can be found in decaying seaweed or under stones. It is thin and nearly an inch long. It breeds best at fairly low temperatures for which reason it is often raised in refrigerators at 45 to 50 degrees F. It lives on decaying organic matter and fresh food. Bread, cracker crumbs, dried milk, all make excellent food for these worms. As with many other types of live food, there are many commercial sources of these and other worms available in the form of starter cultures. TOP

## Blood Worms

Many The larvae of a mosquito-like insect, the midge, are sometimes blood red in color and jointed, living in silty or muddy places though oftentimes caught in daphnia nets in fairly clear water. Blood worms will live a long time in cold water but let the water warm up and the worms will soon develop into winged insects. Bloodworms are available live from most fish supply stores, as well as frozen and freeze-dried, also. They are an excellent food for your guppies. TOP

## Earth Worms

Guppies will eat shredded earth worms but few people seem willing to shred them. Everyone has seen earthworm castings on lawns. The worms eat huge amounts of organic matter mixed with soil. They digest and absorb but a small proportion of what they ingest. Therefore, earthworms, shredded tend to muddy the water unless they are kept unfed for a day or two, or long enough for them to disgorge, or they may be shredded and placed into a fine net and rinsed. To quickly gather a cup of earthworms without having to dig for them, put enough potassium permanganate crystals into a pail of water to make it a deep pink. Pour this solution on a patch of grass and the worms will start coming out of the ground in a few minutes. Although a bit messy, they are an excellent guppy food. TOP

## Glass Worms

When netting for daphnia in a woodland water-hole, especially in shady places, it is not unusual to bring up hundreds of long, almost transparent creatures, pointed at the ends and half an inch long, with darkened areas near each end. They lie level with the surface of the water. These are the larvae of aquatic insects. They are frequently netted under the ice in winter and sold in fish supply stores. They stand crowding remarkably well, but not heat. They are a good live food for your guppies, but by no means at the top of the list. TOP

## Black Worms

Since tubifex worms have fallen out of favor, you will now find that most of your fish supply houses are carrying black worms, which appear identical to tubifex worms except they are darker in color. I must be honest and tell you that I do not currently know if these worms can cause the same type of problems that tubifex worms are notorious for, but in the next week or so I plan to do some research and inquire from some experts in the field if these worms are a safer alternative. At that time this section will be updated with that information. I have used these worms in the past with no problems, but that does not mean that the potential for problems does not exist. TOP

### Wingless Fruit Flies

Wingless fruit flies are a great food that you never hear mentioned very much. In its natural habitat the guppy is primarily a surface feeder, hence its upturned mouth. All of the previous foods mentioned (except mosquito larvae) are either free swimming or bottom dwellers. Raising wingless fruit flies is extremely easy and when sprinkled atop your aquarium water your guppies will practically fling themselves out of the tank as they attack the flies. They are an excellent "change of pace" food for your guppies and are available in inexpensive starter cultures from many commercial sources. I suggest that you try them on your fish. They are a good nutritional food source and your fish will find them to be a welcome treat. TOP