

How to breed *Blaptica Dubia* (Argentine Orange Spotted Cockroach)

Dubia roaches are one of the most popular livefoods for exotic pet keepers to raise at home. They are a tropical, livebearing species from Central and South America, and make an excellent staple food for most insectivorous pets. Unlike some other species of cockroach, they are not a pest species and require tropical temperatures to induce breeding. This species is also unable to fly, jump, or climb smooth surfaces such as glass or plastic, and if kept correctly, their culture should not smell. Females give birth to 20-40 nymphs every month, making them a very productive feeder insect.

Culturing *Blaptica dubia*

The most common method of housing Dubia roaches is a large plastic storage box with a tightly fitting lid. A soldering iron or drill can be used to make a large number of holes in the plastic lid to prevent condensation and increase airflow.

Inside the tub, you will need areas for your roaches to hide. The easiest way to achieve this is to use cardboard egg trays, which are often available for free from your local grocers or supermarket. These cardboard flats provide a large surface area, which accommodates many roaches, and if stacked vertically, allows the frass (cockroach waste) to fall to the bottom of the tub.

A small heat mat recommended for reptiles and amphibians should be placed under the roach tub to provide heat. These are usually low wattage and are inexpensive to run. Dubia roaches breed well when the temperature of the tub is kept between 29-35°C, which can be controlled with the use of a thermostat, ensuring the culture box does not get too hot or cold. Alternatively, the culture box can be placed in a warm area of your home, such as an airing cupboard, or on top of a heating vivarium.

Two small containers should be added to the tub, one to hold dry food and another for water gel or



fresh vegetable matter. Plastic takeaway tubs work well for this, although the smooth sides can make it difficult for Dubia roaches to climb, so it is recommended to use sandpaper to rough up the surface.

When it comes to adding roaches, more is better. They will breed faster when kept in higher concentrations, but as a minimum aim to start with at least 25+ adult females, and 10+ males. As the culture grows, you can feed the males to your insectivorous animals.

Feeding

Dubia cockroaches will eat a wide range of food, although it is recommended to keep the diet varied to ensure they get a balance of nutrients needed for successful breeding and, ultimately, to transfer to any insectivorous animals that you feed them to.

Dry foods, including cereal, oats, crushed dog food, cat food, fish flakes and chicken layer pellets make up the bulk of the diet, as they are cheap and easy to feed, requiring very little maintenance. If the culture box is well ventilated, these shouldn't become mouldy, and you will only need to add more as it is eaten.



Fruit and vegetables, such as potato and carrot peelings, apple slices and orange segments can be offered, both for nutrition and as a water source, however these will foul quickly if not eaten, and will need to be removed after a few days to prevent mould growth.

Water can also be provided using water gel crystals (Polyacrylamide gel), which are commonly used for invertebrates, as they can drown in standing water. Water gel will become fouled with waste from the culture, but will not mould like fresh vegetable matter.

Notes

Established cultures of *Blaptica dubia* are common in the exotic pet hobby, despite high prices for starter cultures online. Ask around to see if a few helpful keepers will send you some spare adults from their cultures to get you started.

Many other feeder roaches can be kept in this manner, including Discoids (*Blaberus discoidalis*) and Lobster cockroaches (*Nauphoeta cinerea*)

If you require further information about *Blaptica dubia* or this article, please email the author at:

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