



Worm Wise

by Jude Southee

When you visit a farm, you expect to see sheep, cows, horses, and maybe pigs. But when our class visited a farm, we saw worms – thousands and thousands of worms!

When we arrived, Mr Whitta, the “worm man”, showed us the worm beds.





These were big, wooden boxes with covers made of woollen underfelt. Mr Whitta lifted one of the covers, and we all held our noses.

“That’s pig manure you can smell,” said Mr Whitta. “The worms eat it.”

“Yuck!” we said.

“Worms eat all kinds of rubbish

that we usually throw away,” said Mr

Whitta. “They’ll eat anything that has ever been alive. Kitchen scraps, grass clippings, wool, even paper because that’s made from trees.”



When we looked into the bins, we couldn’t see many worms. “The worms don’t like light, so they’re always at the bottom of the pile,” said Mr Whitta. He put his hands into the bin and pulled up a handful of squirming, wriggling worms. “If you look carefully, you can see some eggs too. Each egg has three or four worms in it, and each worm can produce over 1500 babies in one year.”





“The worms’ pooh is called castings,” Mr Whitta went on. “It makes really good fertiliser for the garden.”

“How do you get the worms out of the castings?” asked one of the teachers.

“The worms always move towards new food,” said Mr Whitta. “So we put some food into one end of the box. Then we take the castings from the other end and put them into this barrel here.” He led us over to a big machine. “The castings are put into the barrel.



As it turns, the castings fall through the holes, and the worms move up to the other end of the barrel. We sell the castings to gardeners.”

“What happens to the worms?” we asked.

“They go back into the worm beds – or we sell them to people who want to start their own worm farms,” said Mr Whitta.

He showed us a worm farm that people could have at home to put their kitchen scraps into. “We have tiger worms here because they’re so greedy,” he said. “They eat their own body weight in food each day.”

“We could have a worm farm at school!” said our teacher.

“Yeah,” we said. “Then if we forget to do our homework, we can always say that our worms ate it!” ■



How to Make a Worm Farm

You will need:

three ice cream containers with lids
a hammer and a nail
some sharp scissors.

1. Use the hammer and nail to make several holes in the bottom of **two** of the ice cream containers.
2. Get an adult to help you cut a large circle from the middle of **two** of the lids.
3. Stack two of the containers in the following way:
 - on the bottom, the container **without** holes and with a cut-out lid;
 - on the top, a container **with** holes and with the uncut lid on it.



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4. Place the worms in the top container. Place food scraps on top of the worms.
5. As you add food scraps, the worms will move up into the new food, leaving their castings behind.
6. When the top container is full, change its lid to a cut-out one.
7. Add the second container with holes and put the uncut lid on top.
8. Start adding food scraps to the top container. The worms will move up through the holes into the new food scraps.
9. When most of the worms have moved into the top container, remove the middle one and use the castings on the garden.
10. The bottom container collects the moisture, which can also be used on the garden. ■



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