



Red Runner Roach (*Blatta lateralis*)

Breeding and Care Guide

Red Runner Roaches, also known as Turkestan or Rusty Red roaches, are among the most prolific and efficient feeder insects available to hobbyists. Unlike Dubia roaches, which are ovoviviparous (giving live birth), Red Runners are oviparous, meaning they lay egg cases known as oothecae. This guide provides a structured approach to establishing and maintaining a thriving colony.

Environmental and Housing Requirements

The foundation of a successful Red Runner colony is a secure and well-ventilated enclosure. While these roaches are unable to climb smooth glass or plastic surfaces, they are exceptionally fast and can jump short distances, necessitating a secure, mesh-ventilated lid.

- ****Enclosure Type:** A 30 - 45 quart dark plastic storage bin.
- **Ventilation:** Mesh-covered cutouts in the lid or the sides for high airflow. If you put the cutouts on the sides, you can stack the bins. I usually do one cutout on each end for airflow.
- **Climbing Surface:** Vertically stacked cardboard egg flats; no loose substrate. You can also use toilet paper rolls. Make sure the egg crates do not lean up against the mesh cut outs - freshly hatched roaches can climb the egg crates and escape through some meshes unless you use mosquito netting.
- **Escape Prevention:** A 2-inch barrier of petroleum jelly at the top rim. This is an extra precaution and isn't necessary if your bin is slick.
- **Lighting:** Opaque bins or dark placement; roaches are strictly nocturnal.

Vertical orientation of egg flats is crucial as it allows waste (frass) to fall to the bottom of the enclosure, maintaining a cleaner environment for the roaches and simplifying the cleaning process for the keeper.

Temperature and Humidity Management

Red Runners are a desert-dwelling species and require specific thermal gradients to trigger their reproductive cycle. While they can survive at standard room temperatures, breeding will effectively cease if the environment is too cool.

Critical Breeding Temperature: To maintain a high reproductive rate, the ambient temperature should be kept between **85°F and 90°F (29°C – 32°C)**. Temperatures exceeding 95°F (35°C) can be lethal and may cause a total colony collapse.

- **Temperature:** Optimal range for breeding is 85°F – 90°F. Use a heat mat with a dedicated thermostat.
- **Humidity:** Maintain 40% – 60%. Provide moisture-rich foods; avoid heavy misting.
- **Airflow:** High airflow is essential. Ensure ventilation holes are not obstructed by egg flats.

While the adults prefer a drier environment, the oothecae (egg cases) require a baseline level of humidity to prevent desiccation. Providing a consistent source of hydration through moisture-rich vegetables or water crystals is typically sufficient to meet these needs.

Nutritional Strategy and Hydration

A "gut-loaded" roach is a superior nutritional source for your pets. The diet should consist of a high-protein dry staple supplemented with fresh produce for vitamins and hydration.

- **Dry Staple:** A high-quality roach chow or a blend of grains (oats, wheat bran, and cornmeal) with approximately 15% protein will support rapid growth and egg

production. **Crypto Cresties Critter Meal** is an excellent premium food blend that can be fed for regular feedings or used as a gut-load.

- **Fresh Produce:** Offer items such as carrots, squash, sweet potatoes, and apples three times weekly. These should be removed within 24 hours to prevent mold growth or the attraction of pests like fruit flies.
- **Hydration Safety:** Open water dishes must be strictly avoided to prevent drowning. Instead, utilize water crystals (polyacrylamide gel) or high-moisture fruits like oranges and carrots.
 - **Note:** If you provide oranges, be sure to remove them from the colony 72 hours before feeding any of the roaches to your reptiles. Insects that have consumed citrus and then are fed to reptiles can cause problems in the reptiles like diarrhea, dehydration, and poor calcium absorption. The acids in these fruits, particularly citric and oxalic acid, interfere with digestion and nutrient uptake.
 - **Management Tip:** If you need to use citrus to hydrate or encourage breeding in feeder insects, set aside a separate smaller group of insects that are gut-loaded with reptile-safe, calcium-rich vegetables such as kale, squash, or carrots for feeding your reptiles in the meantime.

Breeding Cycle and Colony Management

Red Runners are remarkably prolific. A healthy female can produce an ootheca every 7 to 10 days under ideal conditions.

- **Incubation:** Oothecae typically hatch in 3 – 5 Weeks, dropping dark brown, bean-shaped egg cases.
- **Nymph Yield:** Each egg case produces approximately 15 – 25 nymphs, which emerge as a "cluster" of hatchlings.
- **Maturity:** Nymphs take 2 – 4 Months to reach adulthood, influenced heavily by temperature and protein intake.
- **Adult Lifespan:** Adults typically live for 6 – 12 Months. Females are wingless, while males have full wings.

To maintain a self-sustaining colony, aim for a sex ratio of approximately **one male for every four females**. Overcrowding can lead to a decrease in production, so regular harvesting of adults and large nymphs for feeding is recommended to keep the population dynamic.

Maintenance and Troubleshooting

Maintaining a Red Runner colony is relatively low-effort. Every three to six months, the frass (waste) at the bottom should be removed. It is advisable to sift this waste through a mesh strainer to recover any unhatched oothecae or small nymphs that may have fallen to the floor.

If you observe that egg cases are failing to hatch, it is often a sign of insufficient humidity or inconsistent temperatures. In such cases, transferring the oothecae to a separate "hatchling container" with a steady 85°F temperature and slightly higher humidity (60%) can significantly improve the hatch rate.