

# Milkweed Bugs

## A CAROLINA™ CareSheet

### Immediate Care and Handling

As soon as your order arrives, open the shipping container and inspect your milkweed bugs. At 29° C (84° F), the egg stage lasts 4 days, so hatching should begin soon. The color of the egg gradually changes from yellow to deep orange as it nears hatching. The newly emerged nymph is about the size of a pinhead and is bright orange. The nymph grows by a series of molts. It takes about a month for the nymph to become an adult, which lives for about an additional month.

### Habitat Setup and Maintenance

Gallon jars or small terrariums make suitable culture vessels. Secure a piece of cloth over the top to prevent escape and provide ventilation. Place crumpled paper in the bottom of the container to provide a surface for the bugs to crawl on. Provide water with a paper towel or cotton wick protruding through a hole in the lid of a small jar of water; set the small jar in the habitat. Feed cracked sunflower seeds to both adults and nymphs. Change the water and seeds when they become dirty—milkweed bugs will not completely consume the seeds.

A cotton ball or cheesecloth stuffed in a small jar or cup will provide a substrate for females to lay eggs. Milkweed bugs may eat their own eggs, so collect them daily and place in a new culture vessel. Cultures do very well at room temperature.

### FAQ's

*How often should I change the sunflower seeds?*

The nymphs and adults do not completely eat the seeds. Replace the seeds when they become shrunken or dirty.

*How can I tell male from female milkweed bugs?*

In adult bugs, the ventral side of the 4th abdominal segment (counting from the thorax) bears a black band in the male and 2 prominent black spots in the female.

*How can I tell nymphs from adults?*

The young nymphs do not have wings. As is typical of insects that undergo incomplete metamorphosis, the wing pads begin to appear in the early stages, gradually increase in size at each molt, and become prominent in the last nymph stage.

*When will the bugs produce eggs?*

Mating takes place 5 to 12 days after the last molt for females and 2 to 3 days for males. Egg laying begins 1 to 15 days after mating and peaks at about 20 days.

*Will my milkweed bugs eat anything other than sunflower seeds?*

In nature, as their name implies, they eat milkweed seeds. In culture, they have eaten cracked seeds of watermelon, squash, cashew, and almond. Once they have adapted to eating one food, it may take several generations for them to adapt to another.

**Problems?** We hope not, but if so contact us. We want you to have a good experience.

**Orders and replacements:** 1-800-334-5551 then select Customer Service

**Technical Support and Questions:** [caresheets@carolina.com](mailto:caresheets@carolina.com)



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