Intermediate

Camponotus modoc

Western carpenter ant

A big, matt black carpenter ant that nests in rotten wood in the forests of western North America. A North American ant, not sold by Best Ants UK and possibly illegal or impossible to import to the UK.

ORIGIN
Western North America
Conifer and mountain forests, nests in rotten logs, stumps and under bark

NEST TEMPERATURE
24–28°C
Advanced Heating System Small at 24°C, under a quarter of the nest

OUTWORLD TEMPERATURE
18°C night, up to 28°C day
By day like the nest or a degree or two cooler

HUMIDITY
Nest 50–70%
Outworld about 50%, never watered

WINTER
Cool rest 3–4 months
4–10°C in a hibernation unit with precise control. No rest in a queen's first year

MOVE TO A NEST
3+ workers
5+ is better

SIZE
Queen 16–20 mm
Workers 6–12 mm, majors up to 18 mm, matt black

COLONY
One founding queen
Slow start, then many hundreds of workers

Food

- **Proteins:** Cricket Mash (the more efficient protein for carpenter ants) or Protein Jelly (keep it in the fridge)
- **Carbohydrates:** organic Ant Honey or Ant Nectar, far better than sugar water or home-made mixes

- Twice a week, small amounts, outworld only, on tin foil or a feeding dish; leftovers out after 2 days. Founding queen: a tiny drop of protein jelly on tin foil once a week. Small colonies don't need live insects
- Buy food only from established ant-keeping suppliers: bird seed, dried mealworms and pet-shop live food often carry blood-sucking mites

Water

- Distilled or purified water only, never tap, rain or mineral water, even boiled
- Pipette a few drops at a time through the watering hole and stop when 1 or 2 drops appear inside; water when the meter drops below 50%
- Never open water: a watering test tube in the outworld, never a water dispenser; never water the outworld

Best setup

- Carpenter Ant Farm Starter Kit (nest with humidity and temperature meter) or A7 Plus with its pre-installed digital meter
- Daylight, never direct sunlight; away from windows, radiators, vibration, speakers and kitchens. Test tube warmth: a heating cable at the cotton stopper end only, never a heat mat
- Escape risk: big, strong climbers. PTFE Fluon band around the top inner edge of the outworld lid, reapplied about every 4 weeks (every 2 weeks for 300+ ants)

Good to know

- Most carpenter queens eat their eggs in transit: normal for Camponotus, she lays again within 2–3 months
- On arrival: parcel unopened for 5 hours, then 4–5 days of complete rest in its packaging
- No sting, but big majors nip hard and spray formic acid. Never handle them, never a fridge, shed or garage

Read the full care guide | **All our ant care sheets**

Best Ants UK care sheet. These notes cover the essentials only: read the full care guide and our ant farm setup guide from A to Z.