Intermediate

Novomessor cockerelli

Desert long-legged ant

A big, long-legged desert ant that scavenges insects, seeds and fruit and carries large finds home as a team. A North American ant, not sold by Best Ants UK and possibly illegal or impossible to import to the UK.

ORIGIN
South-western USA and northern Mexico
Creosote desert plains, pebble-ringed nests

NEST TEMPERATURE
25–30°C
Advanced Heating System Small at 28°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
Gradient: rest areas 30–45%, brood corner 60–80%
Never hydrate the whole nest. Outworld about 50%, never watered

WINTER
No hibernation
May slow for 2–3 months; never below 15°C, 17°C is safer

MOVE TO A NEST
10+ workers
15–20 is better, a lone queen too

SIZE
Queen about 11–14 mm
Workers about 7–10 mm, one size, very long legs

COLONY
One queen
A few hundred to a few thousand workers

Food

- **Proteins:** Protein Jelly or Cricket Mash twice a week; protein matters most for this scavenger, never skip it

- **Seeds:** our harvester seeds as a regular part of the menu, on tin foil or a feeding dish, never on the substrate (sprouted seeds are harmful)
- **Carbohydrates:** organic Ant Honey or Ant Nectar once a week, for example every Thursday; far better than sugar water
- Outworld only, leftovers out after 2 days. Founding queen: a tiny drop of protein jelly on tin foil once a week. Buy food only from established ant-keeping suppliers (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 the brood corner only
- Never open water (they can drown): a watering test tube in the outworld, never a water dispenser; never water the outworld

Best setup

- A7 Plus ant farm with its pre-installed digital meter (Nest + Outworld option if you already have your ants)
- Daylight, never direct sunlight; away from windows, radiators, vibration, speakers and kitchens. Test tube warmth: a heating cable at the cotton stopper end only
- Escape risk: fast, strong climbers that probe every seam. 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

- No sting, but very defensive with a strong bite: never handle them
- On arrival: parcel unopened for 5 hours, then 4–5 days of complete rest in its packaging
- In the wild, workers plug the entrances of rival harvester nests with grit and pebbles

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.