Myrmecia pyriformis

Giant Bulldog Ant | Care Sheet

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KEEPING LEVEL	ORIGIN	NEST TEMPERATURE	NEST HUMIDITY	WORKERS BEFORE NEST
🎓 Expert	🌍 Australia	🌡️ 22–26°C	💧 50–70%	🏠 10+

🐜 At a glance

Origin	🇦🇺 South-eastern Australia
Keeping level	Expert — large, fast, sharp-eyed hunters with a serious sting
Workers	Very large, around 20–25mm, dark reddish brown to black with long serrated mandibles
Colony form	Usually a single queen
Founding	Semi-claustral — the queen leaves her chamber to hunt for her first brood
Mature colony	Hundreds of workers in a mature colony
Nest temperature	22–26°C
Nest humidity	50–70%
Workers before moving into a nest	10+
Winter	No hibernation — keep at room temperature, never cold

📖 About this species

The giant bulldog ant is one of the largest and most impressive ants in the world. Workers have excellent eyesight, hunt alone and are mostly active from dusk into the night, which makes an evening viewing session something special. This is a true bucket-list species for the experienced keeper.

> ⚠️ **Dangerous sting — adults only.** Bull ant stings are extremely painful and, in sensitive people, can cause a severe allergic reaction (anaphylaxis). Never handle the ants, never let children near an open setup, always use long tweezers and keep the lid closed. Anyone with a known insect-sting allergy should not keep this species.

📦 When your ants arrive

- ⚠️ **MOST IMPORTANT:** leave the parcel completely unopened, exactly as it arrived, at room temperature for **5 hours**. The ants must adjust to your home's temperature gradually — abrupt temperature changes make ants seriously unwell.
- After the 5 hours, check the queen is safe and sound, then leave the colony in its original packaging (test tube still in its tin foil and wrapping) in a quiet spot — in daylight, never direct sunlight — away from vibration and daily household activity.
- 😴 Give the colony **4 to 5 days** of complete rest. The ants were fed before dispatch and need nothing from you during this time. Assemble and water the nest while you wait.
- Still workers or a motionless queen after delivery are almost always delivery stress. Check the antennae: moving antennae means she is fine. Almost all recover within 4 to 5 days (a little longer for bigger queens).
- Do not remove the black divider inside the test tube (between the two cotton stoppers) — it keeps the ants safe in transit. It has a hole, and the queen and all workers pass through it without any issue.
- 👑 Start with a colony, never a lone queen or a single worker: choose at least 10 workers with eggs, larvae or pupae laid inside that colony (not added from elsewhere) — that is your proof of a fertile egg-layer. The egg-layer often looks almost identical to the workers, so the brood is the only reliable sign for most keepers. The more workers, the better your chance of success.

🏠 Moving into the ant farm

- Keep the colony in its test tube until it has at least 10 workers. Moved earlier, the workers often abandon the queen in the larger space, which can lead to colony failure.
- Connect the test tube to the nest with the delivery tin foil still on and leave it for 14 days. Then slide the foil back about 1mm every day until the tube is fully exposed to daylight.
- If the ants have not moved in 2 days after the tube is fully exposed, wrap the foil back on, wait another fortnight and repeat the whole process — patience is the key. Moving in happens on the ants' own time: anywhere from a couple of days to 6 months.
- The red filter and black cover stay on the nest at all times — it is pitch dark inside. The black cover can come off once a day for 2 to 3 minutes (ideally at night); the red filter once a week for 2 to 3 minutes.
- ☀️ Place the ant farm in normal daylight, never direct sunlight (the sun can overheat a nest within minutes). Avoid windows, radiators and heaters, vibrating surfaces, speakers and TVs, strong smells such as the kitchen, and busy walkways. Keep a steady room temperature.

🍯 Feeding

- 🦗 **Live prey is the heart of this species' diet** — it is a true hunter and will not thrive on jelly alone. Offer live crickets, cockroach nymphs (our Red Runner or Dubia Roaches) or flies — 2 to 3 times a week, in the outworld only, sized so a single worker can overpower it.
- 🔍 Buy live food only from a clean, trusted breeder and check it for mites before it goes in — mites can destroy a colony, starting with the queen. Larger prey the ants accept pre-killed (mealworms, crickets, locusts) should be scalded first: hold it with tweezers in just-boiled water (no longer bubbling) for 10 to 15 seconds, chop it in half and serve on a small tin foil tray.
- 🥩 NextSwarm Cricket Mash is a useful protein top-up between hunts. Adult bull ants drink a lot of sweet liquid — in the wild they feed on nectar while the larvae eat prey — so offer organic honey or Ant Nectar twice a week.
- 🧹 Remove leftovers and uneaten prey after 2 days to prevent mould. A springtail clean-up crew in the outworld helps keep things tidy.

💧 Watering the nest

- 💧 Use **distilled or purified water only** — never tap, rainwater or bottled mineral water, even boiled. They carry minerals and microbes that turn a nest green with mould. A litre of distilled water costs a few pounds and lasts over a year.
- Water the nest with the pipette provided: pour slowly, a few drops at a time, through the watering hole, and stop as soon as 1 or 2 drops appear inside the nest — that is how you know it is done correctly. More than that is too much.
- Once a week is usually right — slightly more in summer, less in winter. Never water the outworld.

🌡️ Temperature and winter

- No hibernation. These Australian ants slow down a little in winter at normal room temperature, which is natural — keep the nest at 22–26°C for the rest of the year.
- If your room is cool, use the Advanced Heating System Small 4W under no more than a quarter of the nest, opposite the water inlet.
- Never let the colony get cold, and never expose it to abrupt temperature changes.

⭐ Golden rules | Never break these

- 🚫 Never put ants in a fridge, and never expose them to abrupt temperature changes. Cold does not kill a colony instantly — the ants get sick and die over the following days — and prolonged cold near freezing damages the sperm a queen stores from her nuptial flight, so she may never lay fertile eggs again.
- 🚫 Never use gel ant farms, Ytong or concrete nests, or DIY nests.
- 🚫 Never use tap, rain or mineral water, even boiled.
- 🚫 Never move a colony into a nest too early, and never tip or shake ants out of their tube.
- 🚫 Never disturb the colony with tapping or handling — vibration stresses the queen and she can stop laying or eat her eggs.
- ☀️ Never keep the farm in the dark: ants need daylight for their circadian rhythm. Daylight yes — direct sunlight never.
- 📟 Choose a nest with a pre-installed humidity and temperature meter (our A5 M PLA or A4-2 Smart Meter) — humidity is impossible to check any other way, and it matters most for these species.
- 🧤 Never handle these ants or let children handle the setup — always use long tweezers and keep the lid closed and the PTFE band fresh.

🛒 Recommended for this species

Myrmecia pyriformis colony | **A4-2 Smart Meter Ant Farm** | **PTFE Escape Barrier** | **Advanced Heating System 4W** | **Fine Tweezers 180mm** | **Red Runner Roaches** | **Dubia Roaches** | **Ant Nectar**

📚 These care notes cover the essentials only. Please read the full ant farm setup guide and our bull ant guide from A to Z — we recommend printing both for a successful ant-keeping experience. Questions? Message us through our contact form — we are always happy to help. 💚

Written and reviewed by the Best Ants UK team, keeping ants since 1997.