BEST ANTS UK | ANT CARE SHEET

Keeping ants since 1997

Beginner*

Camponotus socius

Sandhill carpenter ant

A big, rusty-red carpenter ant with an orange-banded gaster from the sandhills of the south-eastern USA. A North American ant, not sold by Best Ants UK and possibly illegal or impossible to import to the UK.

ORIGIN

South-eastern USA

Sandhills and open pine woodland; nests deep in sandy soil

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 40–60%

Outworld about 50%, never watered; never let the nest get wet

WINTER

Cool rest about 2 months

12–15°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 17–20 mm

Workers 7–12 mm, majors 10–16 mm, rusty red, orange-banded gaster

COLONY

One queen

Dozens to 100+ workers in year one, thousands later

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 40%
- 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 majors bite firmly 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.