BEST ANTS UK | ANT CARE SHEET

Keeping ants since 1997

Intermediate

Novomessor albisetosus

Desert harvester ant

A long-legged, rusty red desert harvester that gathers seeds, insect pieces and fruit. 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

Desert to pine-oak woodland, nests under stones

NEST TEMPERATURE

24–30°C, best 27–28°C

Advanced Heating System Small at 27°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 60–75%

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 10 mm

Workers 6–8.5 mm, rusty red, long legs, one size

COLONY

One or several queens

Usually a few hundred workers

Food

- **Proteins:** Protein Jelly or Cricket Mash twice a week; protein matters most for this scavenging harvester, never skip it
- **Carbohydrates:** organic Ant Honey or Ant Nectar once a week, for example every Thursday; far better than sugar water

- **Seeds:** a few of our harvester seeds as an extra, on tin foil or a feeding dish, never on the substrate (sprouted seeds are harmful)
- 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 when the meter drops below 60%
- 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 bold defenders with an irritating bite: never handle them
- On arrival: parcel unopened for 5 hours, then 4–5 days of complete rest in its packaging
- Forages in the cooler morning and evening hours and recruits nestmates to carry big finds

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.