



# Care Instructions for ants

## Transport

Depending on the ant species and its size the colony is transported in a test tube or a small box.

**The test tube** is made out of glass or plastic. The tube can be opened on one side while it is closed on the other side. On the closed side it has a water tank which is separated from the nest through a piece of cotton. The cap for the test tube is permeable to air. The ants can supply themselves with humidity and water through the cotton.



**Plastic boxes** often contain an open test tube so the ants can supply themselves with water and also have a place to hide during the transport. The plastic box is necessary when the colony is either too big or there is the risk that due to the stress of the transport the ants could harm each other with formic acid if they are kept within a closed test tube. Usually there is some loose paper added to the box so the ants have more places to hide.



**A winter package** is used for species that are temperature sensitive. It is usually used between November and April. Depending on the outside temperature, the species and its sensitivity the package includes insulating material and a heatpack that keeps the ants warm for up to 36 hours.



## Moving the ants

Usually the colony should move out of the transportation facility by itself so the ants can carry the brood and the eggs into their new home. Therefore the test tube or plastic box should be put into an already setup formicarium into the arena area (basin). At the beginning the animals will try to close the opened test tube with everything they can find. This behaviour is completely normal because at this time the tube is their nest and they feel safe inside. You should be patient with them. Depending on the species and its size, moving from the test tube to the new location takes a few days up to several weeks.

If there is not enough space for the test tube inside the formicarium then you should connect the test tube with the formicarium with a flexible tube. The colony can stay inside of the test tube as long as there is still water inside the water tank.

You should avoid hitting the tube so they fall out of it. Only if there is no other way. It means a lot of stress for the animals which can harm them and brood can be lost.

You might pick the animals up with your fingers. Usually the ants have a chitinous exoskeleton and the human fingers are soft on the inside so that does no harm to the ants. If you want to use a tool because it is for example a stinging ant species you should use tweezers.



# Arrangement of the nest

Make sure that the nest meets the requirements of the particular ant species.

Never put the formicarium directly in front of a window or on top of a vibrating underground. Never let the sun shine directly on the nest area. The nest area should always be kept dark or covered with a darkening film. That way the animals feel safe and you can observe them.

If it is a species that digs its nest into the ground and there is sand in the way and you cannot see anything you can use a so called disc magnet to clear the sight. A heat mat should never be placed directly under the nest area because it would dry out the bottom ground too fast.

We recommend a heating lamp above the basin. Make sure there is enough distance between the lamp and the basin and there is a ventilation so the basin doesn't heat up too much and there will be no condensation water.



# Feeding

Depending on the ant species the food should be given in small separated cups so the bottom ground doesn't mold. Waste and food that has been left over should be removed regularly. Dead insects that were left over or meat should be removed after one day. Very important for all ant species is always to have access to water.

To assure that you can use a drinking trough or a small cup filled with water. To make sure that the animals cannot drown in the water you can place small stones inside the cup or a sponge. That way the animals can supply themselves with water through the sponge or the stones.

Never feed with food that contains preservatives. If you use living food, make sure to check it for parasites or treat it with boiling water first.



# Hibernation

Some species need to hibernate, depending from the region they are from

As a standard value for north and middle european species it is:

Beginning of November until end of March with temperatures between +5°C and +8°C

For south european species:

Beginning of December until beginning of February with temperatures between +12°C and +15°C

It doesn't matter if you use a fridge or a cellar.

The only thing important is that the animals are never exposed to temperatures below 0°C and that they have enough water. A test tube with a full water tank would be enough for the whole time of hibernation. If they have moved already into the formicarium then you have to make sure to moisten the bottom ground regularly.

Unfortunately drying out is the most common reason for beginners why their animals don't survive the hibernation period.



# Risks

Short summary about what can lead to the death of the ants:

Water: Never use chloric or coppery or distilled water!

Bottom ground: Never use bottom ground that was made for birds or use sand that was made for decoration purposes if you don't know the ingredients!

Plants: Don't use plants from garden centers as they are usually treated with pesticides!

Cleaning: Never clean the formicarium with chemical cleanser!

When building a formicarium: Don't use glue containing solvent. Never use antibacterial or antifungal silicon.



The Antstore team wishes you a lot of fun keeping and observing your new pets.