Care-sheet for your Messor Structor Colony (6 Pages long)

Name: Messor structor
Colony form: polygyne
Sizes: Queen: 9.5-10.5mm, workers: 4-9.5mmmm (majors have big red/brown heads)

Arrival of your ants:

- Queen doesn't usually need feeding until her first workers arrive

  (if she has brood you can feed her some honey water 1-part honey to 3 parts water mix)

- First thing is to make sure your queen is alive and store the test tube she is contained in, within a dark place away from direct sun light! Make sure temp is not above **25 Degrees Celsius** (room temp). If you use a heat mat make sure you have a thermostat and a glass thermometer to record temperature aim for 24-28 degrees Celsius for your colony anything above 30 will cook them.

- If you have queen with eggs/brood wrap test tube in tin foil and only check on her every 3-4 days for 2 minutes until her first workers come as they stress easily at the foundation stage and can eat eggs and brood and could die.

- Do not transfer the colony to a nest for at least 72 hours after arrival and make sure the ants have access to food and water inside the nest.

- The test tube should be sufficient enough to house her for the summer at least the first 10-20 workers.

- **Keep the test tube moist!** The water in the bottom of the test tube will keep the colony hydrated until it runs dry then you can pipette 3-4 drops of water onto the cotton once a week or do a test tube change, I recommend it.

- You can check online information how to do a test tube set up and change the test tube, YouTube has some good videos on this it will also give you information on how to change ants to a new test tube.
- If the queen arrives or goes on her back at any point and is not getting up message me **ASAP** (I can give you a guide to fix this her stress levels will be too high)

- I recommend a heat matt for this species with temperature control (Thermostat) get a good quality one so you don't cook the queen! It will allow for maximum growth with the test tube you can keep them in an airing cupboard at 25-28 **Degrees Celsius**.

- Use a thermometer to check max temperature of your air in cupboard (anything over that could kill the queen)

- Slowly increase the temperature by 1-2 **Degrees Celsius every second day till you reach range of 25-28 Degrees Celsius**

  •The test tube should be sufficient enough to house her till summer moves her when she has 10+ workers. Queens tend to fail easier of this species if not kept in a test tube until they have 5-10 plus workers and keep them in a dark place with minimal activity.

- Read up on the species it's all a learning process! GOOGLE is your friend!

Feeding your ants:

- Messor require a main diet of seeds, we sell an organic variety of messor seeds on our website. You can also feed them dead small insects which you can crush like flies, crickets, grasshoppers for example. **Insects are needed for brood development** (can feed them live food when the colony has more workers say 50 +)
- Boil insects before you give them to your colonies just place in boiling water to kill microbes.
- You can give your colony honey water so just buy some honey from your local shop and just add some water to it and place a tiny drop into the test tube (add a tiny bit of salt for Messor to 100ml water say tiny fingernail worth). Only add salt if you are not supplementing their diet with insects but insects are preferred
- When you buy an ant's nest you can connect it with tubing to a plastic container from an ordinary shop and place the food inside this container with some honey water in a milk bottle cap.
- Feed the ants every **2-3 days** and remove any uneaten remains and discard them after this time period (The queen doesn't need to eat until her first workers come but if her abdomen looks small you can give her some food).

Hibernation:

- Ants hibernate when winter kicks in as food is scarce in the wild. They need to **hibernate from late October/ early November till late February/ early April** keep them in a cool area around 10 **Degrees Celsius**
- This maximises the **queen's life expectancy** and her **egg laying yield.**
- When they come out of hibernation slowly increase their temperature maybe 1-2 **Degrees Celsius every other day**

- You can give them seeds and water during **hibernation but they don't need anymore than that. (keep the colony supplied with water)**

- Colonies have already been hibernating so you can skip hibernation till next year or have a mini-4-week hibernation in Jan/February.

- They usually store seeds for winter and their metabolism slows down dramatically

- Messor barbarus do not sting but please note their **mandibles** are big so they may hurt you especially the **queens** and the **major workers.**

Ant nests:

I recommend transferring your ants to a nest when there are at least 10 workers or more that way they can care for the queen in a new environment. Colonies fail because the queen is transferred to a big nest where you can't care for her and she dehydrates be patient and wait for the first 10 workers and keep the colony hydrated in the ant farm and test tube.

To transfer the colony to a nest, place the test tube into the out world of the nest and remove the cotton from the exit of the tube. If the out world is too small tip them directly into the nest using the tube. Wait at least 72 hours after arrival before transferring into a nest.

Make sure the nest has ventilation so the colony can breathe especially in the "antworld" nests replace the rubber bung with ¼ of a ball of cotton wool so the ants have ventilation. It this is not done the ants will appear in a dead like state pop them back into the original test tube with cotton wool at the end and they should come back to life.

I recommend acrylic style nests or a natural tank set up is ideal or y-tong nest.

Sand/soil:

- Allows ants to dig their ant nests, some nests consist of two class panels where you can put sand or soil in the middle (don't use gel farms as a substrate as they promote mould growth replace with sand instead)
- Tanks can be used as they provide a large area for nests to be established and the space above the soil can be used as a forage area
- Tanks have the ability to replicate outdoor environments which is good
- Makes sure the nests are not all damp as seed germination can be a real problem
- Messor like dry areas to store seeds

Y-tong nests:

- Aerated concrete block that can be carved manually or with machinery to create chambers
- A clear acrylic cover allows excellent viewing of ants
- Moisture can be controlled by placing nest in a try filled with water
- You can connect to a forage area (out world) or an out world can be placed on top of the nest connected by tubing
- Dry areas needed to allow ants to store seeds which can be easily achieved
- Excellent viewing for ants

All queens come with a 14-day warranty from the day of dispatch (<u>the queens have to remain in their original test tube for this to be valid</u>) but <u>photographic evidence</u> is required if the queens die

Gel ants nests as a substrate are not suitable for queen ants and workers!

You can convert gel ant farms using clay soil mix as substrate instead of gel which you can easily buy online. Google "clay soil"

Questions or more products such as nests and more ant's email:

antsrus1@gmail.com

Facebook group: https://www.facebook.com/antsrus1/

Website: www.antsrus.com (Lowest prices if you buy direct)