

# General Ant Care & Information

Did you ever want a pet that you didn't have to worry about if you went on vacation?

Ants can be left with just water and humming bird nectar for over 2 weeks with no impact to the health of the colony.

## *Fact:*

Did you know that there are 92 known species of ants in Alberta?



## Ants Require:

- A Formicarium (ant nest)
- An Outworld (or foraging area)
- Food and water
- Heat cable

## Formicarium:

The Formicarium houses the ant colony, providing room and safety for the queen, workers, and brood (baby ants). The Formicarium also provides humidity which is essential to the ant's brood. The Formicarium will need to be watered every 2-5 days depending on the type and size of the Formicarium.

A Formicarium can come in many shapes and sizes, and can be made from many different materials.



## Outworld:

The Outworld, or foraging area, allows you to easily feed the ants without them escaping. It also provides a place for the ants to place their trash and they will often pile it in one corner for easy cleaning.

The Outworld can be made from almost any container as long as it is big enough that you can get one hand in it.

The Formicarium and Outworld are attached together with vinyl tubing.



Some Formicariums have the outworld built into it.



### **Food and Water:**

Different species may prefer different foods, but all ants require some sort of liquid sugar and protein.

The adult workers will almost exclusively eat sugars and the brood (ant young) will be fed mostly protein. Fruit is welcomed.

Sugars: Honey water and hummingbird nectar are the most commonly used sugars. But oriole nectar, maple syrup mixed with water, and other sugars will likely also be accepted.

Protein: Protein is usually provided in the form of insects, but various cooked meats may also be used as treats.

Different species of ants tend to like different types of insects.

Some of the most commonly accepted insects include fruit flies, mealworms, crickets, spiders, white lawn moths, and other small soft insects.

If the insects did not come from a pet store it is advisable to freeze them for at least an hour to prevent any mites or pathogens from harming your ants.

You can also freeze excess insects that you catch or buy. The ants prefer the insects fresh, but will accept them frozen.

Mealworms and flightless fruit flies are easy to culture and raise.

### **Heat:**

Most ants will require a heat cable running underneath one side of the Formicarium. Most native ants will not survive more than a few months at constant room temperature. They require a location where they can warm up. An 11.5 watt reptile heating cable works well.

### **Hibernation:**

In Alberta we have winter and summer, and the ants use the winter to hibernate. Hibernation is a time of rest and re-energizing for the ants.

They will require at least 2 months of hibernation in a location where the temperature is between 2-8°C.

The ideal times are between the end of October and late March, but they will have no problem with hibernation from early December until late February.

If they slow down or become inactive when the temperatures get cool outside, don't worry. It is normal.

Ensure the Formicarium is moist and that the ants have access to water and sugar water at all times in case they wake up for a few minutes.

After hibernation the workers and queen are rested and ready to "work like ants".

### **Preventing Escape:**

Escape prevention is usually a 1-2" layer on the top rim of your Formicarium. Usually made out of virgin olive oil, dried talc powder, or Fluon (Insect-a-slip). Barriers effectiveness will depend on the type of barrier and the species of ant.

### **Obtaining a Colony:**

The easiest ways to get a colony is to get one from another hobbyist or to find a queen after her mating flight and letting her raise her own colony. Most mating flights occur in May, July, and August.

### **Need help?**

[www.formiculture.com](http://www.formiculture.com)

<http://antfarm.yuku.com/>

<http://www.antnest.co.uk/forum.html>

Identification:

<http://www.antweb.org/fieldGuide.do?project=albertaants&rank=genus>