

Formica sanguinea

Latreille, 1798

Blood-red ant

A bold red-and-black raider that steals the pupae of other Formica to raise as helpers, and a project for keepers who already know the basics.



Photo: Philipp Hoenle (myrmecophil), CC0 1.0

At a glance



NEST TEMPERATURE

21–26 °C

In the nest



NEST HUMIDITY

50–60 %

In the nest



HIBERNATION

5–8 °C

Oct – Mar



NUPTIAL FLIGHTS

Jun – Aug



WORKERS

6–9 mm

All the same size



QUEEN

9–11 mm

One or more queens



COLONY SIZE

Reaches 5,000 workers

Growth: Fast



ESCAPE RISK

High

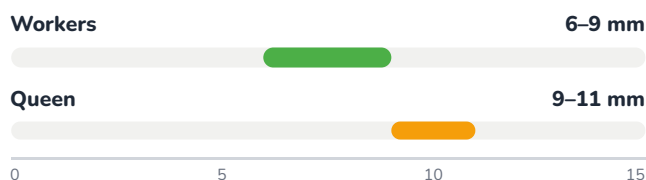
Escape artists: use a closed outworld and a good barrier

Year at a glance



Months for temperate Europe and the Mediterranean. The weather decides the exact days, so flights can come earlier or later where you live.

Sizes on the same scale



Care at a glance

FOOD

Sugar

Insects

BEST NESTS

1. Ytong nest
2. Naturalistic setup
3. Sandwich nest

WHY THIS RATING

- ⚠ A real escape artist that needs an escape-proof setup
- ⚠ Social parasite: the queen needs host workers to start
- ⚠ Needs a cold hibernation, for example in a fridge

Notes from keepers

TIP

Use Formica fusca as the host: it shares the open, dry habitat of this species and is the one shops and most keepers use. Formica cunicularia also works, but Camponotus, red wood ants and all Myrmicinae are not suitable hosts.

WATCH OUT

A raid can wipe out a small host colony in a single night, and formic acid can build up in sealed containers and kill the helpers. Connect a host colony only if you can spare it, use a roomy, ventilated arena where you can cut the link at any time, and stay nearby while it happens.