

Novomessor cockerelli

(André, 1893)

Desert harvester ant

A leggy desert scavenger whose workers team up to haul prey far too big for a single ant.



Photo: Jake Nitta (froggy143), CC BY 4.0

At a glance



NEST TEMPERATURE

27–32 °C

In the nest



NEST HUMIDITY

50–70 %

In the nest



HIBERNATION

Not needed



NUPTIAL FLIGHTS

Jul – Aug

After rain



WORKERS

7–10 mm

All the same size



QUEEN

11–14 mm

One queen



COLONY SIZE

Reaches 5,000 workers

Growth: Fast



ESCAPE RISK

Medium

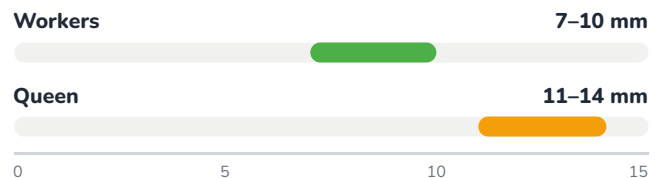
Keep an escape barrier on the outworld

Year at a glance



Months in the native range of the species. The weather decides the exact days, and colonies kept indoors can follow a different rhythm.

Sizes on the same scale



Care at a glance

FOOD

Insects

Sugar

BEST NESTS

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

WHY THIS RATING

- ✓ Fully claustral: the queen needs no food until her first workers arrive
- ✓ No hibernation to manage
- ⚠ Curious workers: keep an escape barrier on the outworld
- ⚠ Needs constant warmth all year round

Notes from keepers

TIP

Heat is the main lever. Keep part of the nest hot and leave a cooler, moister corner: colonies kept at room temperature stagnate, while warm ones raise new workers in about a month. Keep the heat source away from the water reservoir so no condensation forms.

WATCH OUT

Feed more protein than seeds. The workers take insects much more readily than seeds and do not build up food stores like their seed-hoarding relatives, so long gaps between feedings are risky. Some keepers lost freshly hatched workers in small colonies without ever finding the cause; fattier prey and more warmth were the usual suggestions. Clear leftovers within a day, because rotting protein brings mites and mold.