

MESSOR BARBARUS COLONY JOURNAL

20 April 2008

I actually received this ant (then a single queen) back in about October 2007. I kept her in a test tube within a closed box, and waited. And waited! And Waited! It was not until February 2008 that she actually laid any eggs at all. Then at the start of this month – a new worker!! There is a small pile of larvae and pupae, one of which looks like it is darkening already, so hopefully the lobe worker will have a sister help her look after the queen.

Messor barbarus are a type of Harvester ant and will eat various types of seeds as well as small insects. They are black in appearance (or at least mine are) and possess, I believe, a sting. I am not sure if it hurts – and I do not plan on finding out ☺ I also believe that this species does not have a soldier caste, but does have varying sized workers. They are native to southern Europe.

Since the birth of the worker I have placed the test tube into a glass fish tank which has a thin dry layer of soil in it. I have put in a few seeds, and a piece of cricket, but so far they do not seem to have touched it, though, of course, they could have done when I was not looking.

They currently reside in my bedroom.

23 April 2008

There appeared to be a second worker “born” but it seems to have died straight away ☹ Plenty of larvae and a few pupae still present, as well as the first worker. ☺

28 April 2008

I saw the queen happily munching away on the carcass of the dead worker I mention in the previous entry to this journal. This is probably the first bit of “real” food she has had in 6 or 7 months. The seeds seemed to have been ignored, but I did notice that a piece of cricket that I placed into the tank the other day had been dragged into just inside the tube where the nest is located. Still only one worker but one of the pupae is darkening into a pale orange colour. This means that it should soon be “hatching”.

07 May 2008

There are now 2 worker ants with the queen, and the small pile of brood seems to be developing well. Yesterday the queen poked her head out of the test tube and seemed to carry a piece of food back in with her.

08 May 2008

Not really much to add to yesterday's entry other than the 3 ants seem to be doing well.

28 May 2008

There are now 4 workers in this little colony; the 3rd being "born" 2 days ago, and the 4th, today. There are still some larvae in the colony, so hopefully these will develop very soon.

13 June 2008

On checking the test tube the other day, I could only see 3 workers, and today only 2 ☹️ There is still a large pile of brood, though developing very slowly.

26 July 2008

There are now ten workers in the tube with the queen, and a small number of larvae 😊

9 August 2008

There are now about 12-14 workers in this colony, with a nice pile of larvae and pupae in the test tube. They have also piled up various seeds that I placed into the tank, and soil into their tube. They do not seem to take any notice of insect food I give them, and I have never seen them drink from the water reservoir either.

09 November 2008

This is weird! Since my last update, these ants have been disappearing one by one! There is no sign of any dead bodies at all. Over the last 3 months the NUMBER OF workers has slowly diminished until the other day when I saw only the queen remaining in what was obviously a state of dying. Now she has disappeared without trace. My friend thinks it is something to do with Britain going decimal. I am wondering about alien abduction ;-) Quick! Call Mulder & Scully! :-O

JOURNAL CLOSED