

2017

13 June 2017, Tuesday

I obtained this small colony of *Myrmica rubra*, a red stinging ant found throughout Europe, including the UK, from Ants Kalytta via a friend. The colony consists of one queen and about 50-60 workers, with a few larvae present. Currently they reside in a test tube which I have placed open, into a small outworld. Attached to the outworld is a horizontal acrylic ant farm I brought from Antstore last year. So far, I have tried this acrylic ant farm with three different species of ant, and none of them like it, including these rubras. I am not sure why they don't like it but I will keep trying.

The ants settled in very quickly into their new home and seem happy. They have been eating flies, cockroach and protein jelly. I am going to do an over-feeding challenge with this colony, which is something my friend Dermey used to do with his dermestids colonies. Should be interesting.

18 June 2017, Sunday

These ants have settled in well, but have not moved out of their test tube, despite having the acrylic ant farm attached to it. They have explored it in few numbers, but so far don't seem to like it. The queen looks healthy and remains in the test tube, near the cotton wool wick at the far end of the tube. They have eaten everything I have given them, leaving little leftovers. I have noticed some of them wrestling with each other. Ants don't usually attack their own, but perhaps this is some hierarchy behaviour amongst the workers.

22 June 2017, Thursday

This colony appears to have abandoned their test tube for a corner of the foraging box, near the water bowl, though the queen, brood and a few workers remain in the test tube. I have ordered a large ant farm set up, which should arrive tomorrow to transfer this colony into. I am giving up on the acrylic horizontal farm. None of my ant colonies seem to like them.

23 June 2017, Friday

KK, seeing as these ants are ignoring the horizontal acrylic ant farm, I have attached their foraging box to a new glass ant farm (Starter Kit C), which I filled with damp sandy loam. I have covered it up with a dark cloth and left them to it. This was about two hours ago, and a couple of workers are exploring it already. Be interesting to see what they think of it.

19 August 2017, Saturday

These ants do not seem to eat much of what I give them, unless it's those large bluebottle houseflies; those they attack and demolish. Kept having a problem with escapes but found a tiny gap under the lid of the nesting box. I sealed it with Sellotape and that appears to have fixed the problem. A small number of dead ants have been placed in the foraging box, but these are very dark in colour, indicating old age. The queen has been spotted a few times emerging from the nest to examine a food source, but she is often taken back into the nest by the workers. Some brood can be seen in the nest, thanks to the large tunnels and chambers this species build.

1 September 2017, Friday

Lots of new callows born over the past few weeks, and lots of brood present in the nest. The queen still emerges from the nest when food is found, though she doesn't always leave the tube linking the foraging and nesting boxes. Sometimes she'll run to the entrance to the outside world, and then run back again. I didn't know it but this colony produced some winged males, or at least one. I didn't realise this until I

found one worker carrying a dead one about in the nesting box. I can't see any more in the nest.

1 December 2017, Friday

My ants are currently hibernating. Therefore, no updates to this journal will be made until they awake in the Spring.

2018

My ants have woken up from their winter hibernation, or rather their 'semi-hibernation'. They didn't fully hibernate but rather they drastically reduced their activities, often staying within the nest and not feeding. The queen stopped laying eggs, and any present brood (larvae only) went into a stasis in which their development was 'frozen' or put on hold. This is normal behaviour.

Due to this semi-hibernation I stopped updating this journal, otherwise all you would have read, constantly, would be, not much activity today.

However, now that they are resuming their activities I am resuming my activity on these journals.

15 March, Thursday

My ants have woken up from their winter hibernation, or rather their semi-hibernation and have been tucking into their first large meal, since the start of the winter, namely tasty cockroach. I had also cleaned out their foraging tank, replacing all the odd substrate. I placed in some white calcium sand without dampening it (to prevent them from nesting in it).

This is the second year of this colony's life and they seem to be doing well. I gave them their first proper meal since the winter started, and they quickly found it and started eating heartily. I haven't seen the queen yet and there is no sign of any brood, which I didn't expect to see if I am honest. I am going to try one of Dermys' Over-feeding challenges to this colony this year, in which I feed them loads of food. I want to see if this will cause a population explosion.

13 April 2018, Friday

A couple of dead workers found today, though the numbers of live ants is still healthy. I have not seen the queen this year, but I have no reason to suspect anything bad; there certainly has been no sign of her corpse. I gave them some freshly killed cockroach the other day, which they ravenously attacked. Now they have just been given some pineapple flavoured protein jelly. Get ready for the over feeding challenge!

12 May 2018, Saturday

I still haven't seen the queen since they emerged out of hibernation, though there are some vary large larvae present. Perhaps queen larvae? Would be awesome if there were some males and queens produced this year: would be even better if they mated and the queens remain in the colony. However, ants prefer to mate with ants from other colonies so it's a bit of a long hoper.

I have fed them today and they were vary keen to eat the crickets I gave them.

3 June 2018, Sunday

At long last!! I saw the queen yesterday. I haven't seen her since these ants emerged from hibernation, and I was a little worried that she may not have made it. However, when I fed them with some freshly killed crickets yesterday, there was a mass of workers coming out of the nest to feed, and moments later the queen emerged, albeit briefly. I was vary happy about this. There have been some new workers emerging from their pupae stage. Would love to see some queens and males produced this year, and even better if they mated and the new queens remained in the nest. Normally they prefer to mate with ants from other colonies, but who knows what may happen.

2 July 2018, Monday

Lots of activity and pupae present in this colony. And!! I saw a glimpse of a winged ant in this colony too. I couldn't tell whether it was male or female as I didn't get a good enough look, and he/she is vary

good at hiding. However, I am convinced I saw it as red in colour, which is exciting as it means it would be a queen; rubra males are black in colour. This would be, as far as I can recall, the first time I have ever seen a winged female being produced by any of my captive colonies. I have had winged males before, but not winged females.

Thank you for reading my journal. If you have any questions you can email me on myrm@antnest.co.uk

www.antnest.co.uk

www.antnest.co.uk