

Colony Diary 003

# Lasius Niger – My First Colony



Steve Cowles (June 2023)

---

## Background

Species	Lasius Niger
Start Date	10 <sup>th</sup> May 2023
Source	antantics
Starting Point	Queen in tube with between 10 & 20 workers
Objective	This colony was purchased to give me a 'jump-start' in learning how to keep ants rather than having to wait for workers to be born

## Purpose

I am new to keeping ants, apparently it is a hobby which requires a great deal of patience, unfortunately I'm fairly lacking in that department so we will see how that goes.

I have already purchased two queen ants; they are in test tubes on their own in my home office in a quiet place. My research tells me that they will only develop into a colony of a few workers this year and that is if all goes to plan. I would like to have something to look at and learn with in the meantime so have taken the cheapest option and purchased a small colony of Lasius Niger to use to learn the ropes.

I selected Lasius Niger specifically for this as they are said to be quite tolerant of mistakes so beginner friendly. This diary is really for my own use to record what has happened and when so that I can look back and hopefully take some lessons from it.

## Source


Purchased from [antantics.co.uk](http://antantics.co.uk) for £14.49 including 1<sup>st</sup> Class Tracked Delivery, they arrived in a test tube in a stout padded cardboard sleeve complete with a small certificate and a QR code to access a care guide so very good first impressions.


The description was *Lasius Niger Queen with 10-20 Workers*. The Queen is from 2022.



## Monthly Progress

Although I am not planning to document every feed and every tiny thing which happen, I do want to keep enough of a record to act as a reminder when I look back so here goes, I hope it turns into a long list.

Update	Notes
<p><b>May 2023</b></p>	<p>This colony was delivered on 10<sup>th</sup> May, they arrived in good condition, I would estimate that there are around a dozen workers.</p> <p>After leaving them for a few days to settle I connected their test tube to an 'Inventor Tom' formicarium (F1) and outworld (O1) so that they can move in should they feel the need, a water tube has also been attached. The Formicarium is covered with red film and a piece of card to black it out, the card is removed for a few minutes each day to allow me to view progress.</p>  <p>I can see no change in numbers and it is very difficult to see if there are any brood or larvae in the tube as the queen is quite secretive, I did spot her in the outworld once (there is usually at least one worker in there) but it must have been for an exploration only as she returned to the tube (I took the opportunity to change the queen tube for a fresh one and placed the old cotton wool in the formicarium in case there were any eggs stuck to it although I could not see any).</p>

Update	Notes
	<p>I have been feeding this colony with a small drop of Nectar and a blob of protein jelly once every three days, they do seem to take most of it on each occasion, so I guess it is a case of being patient to see what happens.</p> <p>It is probably worth noting that the last few days of the month have been exceptionally hot at around 22°C.</p> <p>I've so specific short-term plans but, if they do move in, I may change the outworld for something a little taller to make feeding easier.</p>
<p><b>June 2023</b></p>	<p>It has also been extremely hot, the hottest June on record in fact with room temperature reaching 27 degrees so the nest will have been hotter than that.</p> <p>We got off to an unplanned start with the colony moving back into their test tube (the new one) on the June 1<sup>st</sup>. I took the opportunity to try connecting them to a Wakooshi S1 starter module which I'd just acquired in a job lot, with a very hot month forecast I thought that the ability to hydrate the next might be handy, they move in almost immediately and after a few days they were still visiting the tube only for water, so I replaced it with an S1 water module. I have another plan for the now defunct 'Inventor Tom' next, so it won't go to waste and in truth I made the classic beginner mistake of moving the ants into something too big too early.</p>  <p>This has made feeding easy, in the very hot period I was hydrating every other day and once every 3 days they have had either nectar, chopped mealworm or a chunk of apple. The downside is visibility, I cannot really see what progress is being made in colony growth and don't expect to until it happens as the queen covers everything up and remains inactive.</p> <p>There have been no deaths as far as I can tell. I rarely see any feeding; this is down to the location of the nest and at some point, I need to relocate it but that will be a separate project as I want to change the room layout to create better visibility for my ants overall.</p>

Update	Notes
	<p>Overall, I suppose things are basically going as expected as this colony is still early in its growth stage and is surviving my beginners' efforts and mistakes well so far although I do feel they would be in a better situation if I'd left them in the test tube until a further generation of workers had emerged.</p> <p>I'm hoping to seep them in the starter module until after hibernation but could add extra modules if needed and 'Project 009' covers my growth plan if you are interested in that as I would ideally like to use this colony to test out the flexibility of the Wakooshi module system.</p>