

USING YOUR HCM BEADS

These bags contain Humidity Controlling Molecular (HCM) beads. The beads are a 100% clay product with no chemical additives and are very safe and non-toxic. They are designed to control the humidity in your humidor and scavenge free ammonia. The bags are made of 100% polyester knit fabric. We use the absolute best and purest products available, chosen with cigars in mind.

Your beads have arrived pre-conditioned to 65% RH (unless you've ordered a custom RH) and are ready to place in your humidor. **Don't make any adjustments to the beads or your humidor for at least one week.** Two weeks to a month would be even better. This will allow time for your humidor to begin to reach equilibrium. That means that everything will be seeking a perfect balance of moisture throughout your beads, conditioned space, cigars, and humidor. Please do your best to be patient. The longer you can wait, the better your beads will treat you. Waiting will heal most problems. Patience will help you to avoid problems. Most problems arise because we haven't waited long enough.

Please take time to test and calibrate your hygrometer. A high quality hygrometer that can be calibrated is critical when starting with beads. Both your cigar-keeping success and your bead adjusting skills will rely heavily on your hygrometer's accuracy. If you do not own a high quality hygrometer that can be calibrated, get one immediately; we stock them. Email us and we can get one to you or we may be able to make a suggestion. You may already have what you need; if you aren't sure, don't hesitate to email us and ask.

Calibration is non-negotiable and of the utmost importance. If you develop problems and contact us for help, we will ask you to salt test your hygrometer before we start trouble-shooting. We will insist you do it even if you just did it yesterday. We absolutely must be sure that your hygrometer is perfectly accurate before we start trying to fix anything, and double checking it is both sensible and responsible. It may seem like overkill, but it's a necessary step. There are two easy ways to test and calibrate your hygrometer. You can use the salt test, or use a Boveda 65% pack or a Boveda Calibration Kit. We sell both. The salt test can be found on our web site (www.hcmbeads.com/faq.asp#What_is_the_Salt_Test).

After 24 hours your humidor should settle at, or very near, the set-point of your beads. If it does, you are finished. If not, after a couple weeks to a month, you can raise or lower the RH of your beads by following the simple procedures below.

RAISING THE RH

If the RH is lower than you like, place a small water-soaked sponge in a pan or dish and place it in your humidor overnight. Take the dish and sponge out in the morning and then wait to check your RH in the afternoon. **We cannot stress enough the importance of following the instructions to the letter.** When we say to use a small dish with a sponge, we really mean that. A glass or bowl with water in it is not an alternative as it doesn't provide the evaporative surface area needed. If the RH is still low, simply put the sponge back in the humidor, leave it overnight, remove it in the morning; check the RH in the afternoon, and repeat the process as necessary. If you wish to hasten the process, simply use more wet sponges in more areas of your humidor.

While you are doing this, realize that it takes a good amount of time to recondition everything in your humidor. The amount of time depends on how much you want to raise the RH of your beads, the size of your humidor, how many beads you have, and how many sponges you use. It could take hours, days, or weeks. Take your time. Be patient. The more careful, patient and precise you are, the better the process will work. The time you spend with the process will give you a greater understanding of how humidity works in your humidor, and how your beads react.

You can hasten the process by removing your beads from the humidor and placing them in a Rubbermaid or like container along with the sponges and maybe a little fan to move air. That will move things along drastically, although it isn't really necessary unless you're reconditioning a large amount of beads.

LOWERING THE RH

If the RH is higher than you like, you can lower the RH of the beads by placing them in the refrigerator **for an hour.** This relies on the fact that the RH in your refrigerator is around 45% RH (assuming the

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refrigerator is working properly). The beads will always work to assume the ambient RH (the RH in the area surrounding) regardless of whether they are in the humidor or refrigerator or out in the room. When reconditioning your beads to a lower RH, the ambient RH has to be lower. If the room ambient is less than 5% lower than your desired set-point, don't use it, use the refrigerator or freezer as instructed below.

When the refrigerator isn't working well enough, or you wish to make big changes fast, you can put the beads on a plate and place them in the freezer **for 25 minutes. SET A TIMER!!!** If you freeze the beads, the water in the beads may freeze, expand, and destroy your beads. We don't want that. Odds of it happening are slim, but it can.

After 25 minutes take the beads out of the freezer and place them in a Ziplock™ freezer bag with your hygrometer. Let the bag sit for 24 hours, note the RH, and repeat the process if necessary. It's always best to test your beads with this method before doing any reconditioning at all. If the beads show a lot higher RH in the bag than when they were in your humidor, it will tell you that your humidor is leaky. It's how we'll expose that sort of thing if we ever need to troubleshoot.

STORING HCM BEADS

If for some reason you don't wish to use your beads for some period of time, simply store them in a sealed Ziplock™ bag. That will preserve your beads' RH so that they are ready for use when you need them. If left in the open air, the beads will work double time to assume the ambient RH. As such, they won't be at the proper setting when you need them.

NOTES

Pay very close attention to how your beads react while you are working with them, and you will soon get a good feel for how your beads work. When you recondition your beads take some notes; write down the time you started, the RH when you started, and what the RH is when you are done. Write down anything that you think is pertinent, anything that may help in the future. This helps to quickly figure out how many cycles or how much time it will take to recondition the beads to your desired set-point.

The key to properly conditioning beads is patience. It takes time for water vapor to equalize throughout your cigars, boxes, and walls of your humidor. It's not measured in hours but in days. Use this to your advantage; take your time, and watch intently. Your beads and humidor will tell you what to do, and usually, if you're patient enough, it will tell you that you don't have to do anything at all.

NEVER add water directly to your beads. HCM beads can become very hot and melt their bag. It's not a chemical reaction that causes the heat, it's the friction created by the water rushing into billions of tiny pores at an incredible speed. Adding water directly to the beads will also upset the delicate balance that is equilibrium. Once that balance is thrown off, it takes a huge amount of effort to bring the beads back to their proper set-point.

Only use distilled water to condition your beads. Keeping them clean and free from debris will help them last a lifetime.

Never use the beads to soak up water, such as in a wine-ador. It will cause mold growth, ruin your beads and your cigars, and make a mess. It's dangerous and completely wrong. If you're considering some sort of catch container, dry any standing water and deploy your beads where they are safe and away from it. If you've plugged your wine-ador drain as you should (it's an absolute must if you are using beads, regardless of what you may have heard), the beads will stop the water from collecting and help control its formation.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact us by email us at info@hcmcigarbeads.com.

Thank You!

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