

TIPS FOR USING THE ROSS CANISTER SYSTEM – Brett Tidswell

For the uninitiated, the Ross canister system consists of a plastic canister filled with Zeolite (aka, attapulgite, kitty litter). It is clay that absorbs moisture. It can be found in many appliances such as breathing masks and the tray your cat uses! It is very efficient, but most importantly it can be dried in a microwave oven and re-used.



The Zeolite sometimes becomes slightly glazed or brown in colour and then loses its efficiency and should be replaced. There are many options with the canister set up. There is an adjustable sleeve in the chanter section to let more or less air (and therefore moisture) to the chanter. I normally suggest this be placed in the widest possible opening, or the hose from the chanter removed entirely and a hose used from the blowpipe stock to divert air from going straight onto the chanter.



Zeolite minerals.

Before installing the canister I run around the edges with a file to ensure no sharp corners will wear the bag.

It is recommended that the canister be filtered which can be seen in the relevant article at www.schoolofpiping.com. After drying, all dust should be blown from the canister before reinstalling it. You should regularly clean out the hoses from the canister to ensure your instrument remains dust free. Small particles of dust can affect your reeds quite badly. I also recommend that you sieve the granules after drying.

I have seen it recommended that the canister should only be partially filled to allow more moisture to the reeds. I do not recommend this. The canister should be full to capacity to prevent the Zeolite rubbing together and creating more dust. More importantly less dry Zeolite will mean a period of drying but less time of moisture absorption. It is better to be consistent and have a full canister of slightly moist Zeolite, drying for a longer period. To do this, only dry a portion of the canister. I often only dry 50% of the drone sections in dry weather. I will usually only dry about half an inch of the chanter section even in wet weather. This gives far better stability, allows the moisture a chanter reed needs to operate and stops the sharp/shrill top hand a dry canister creates.

Clean any granules or dust out of the bag frequently and remember to regularly check the integrity of the hoses as leaking hoses will cause drone instability. I always glue the joins in new hoses before installing them as a precaution and check for sharp wire that may pierce the bag.

Follow the instructions supplied with the canister for drying procedures and ensure that the canister is angled correctly in the bag by twisting the hoses, so that it sits sideways and does not contact your arm during cut-outs.

The most comprehensive guide available today for the set up, maintenance and refinement of the Bagpipe is "The Complete Pipers Handbook". Sales of this publication help fund the freely available school of piping website. Copies can be purchased here: <http://www.schoolofpiping.com/handbook.htm>

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