

Here we go again



It only seems like last week that I was flicking through the weekly catch reports, looking at loads of early-season carp caught from all over the country. In the blink of an eye, the warm weather has deserted us, and here we go again on another long, hard slog through to next spring.

I learned some valuable lessons last winter which I plan to capitalise on this year. One of those lessons would be keeping the freezer topped up with bait at the start of the cold weather.

Last time round I allowed the freezer space to be replaced with food, of all things, and on some weeks had to beg, borrow and steal a few kilos here and there from friends! I concentrated on setting small traps with not too much in the way of free offerings, but on a couple of occasions when I could have done with a

quantity of bait going in, I just didn't have enough at the ready.

I like being adaptable to the situation encountered on the day and if a kilo or two is needed, even in the coldest of weather, then it's better to have it with you than not at all. I've witnessed and had some amazing results in the winter months – the key is picking the right time to introduce the bait.

Recently I managed seven fish in 40-odd hours of fishing on my local lake where I introduced three kilos of Cell boilies. A week later, I was still in the same frame of mind and went



Recent success on the methods shown



about it with similar tactics in poorer conditions. This time I blanked an overnigher. There were a few fish in and around my area that night and a single blackcurrant special on a chod rig would, I'm sure, have brought about a bite. We live and learn!

Winter bait tips

Now is the time of year where everyone starts adjusting their base mix and flavour levels, replacing certain amounts of fishmeals with other proteins or just dropping the fishmeal bait altogether and opting for a birdseed or HNV type bait. It puzzles me that some anglers are happy to introduce loads of their fishmeal in the spring and summer months only to drop it at the first sign of a frost

and hop on one of the other aforementioned type baits.

I've used Mainline Cell all year round for several seasons now. It's bait that will bring about instant success as well as being the perfect long-term option. And the best bit is, from this time of year, and right the way through the winter it really comes into its own. The repeat captures right across the country are testament to its quality. I've had plenty of anglers ask me on the quiet where the best place is they can source some Cell! It's a definite classic and I reckon it will eclipse baits such as Activ-8 and, dare I say, the original Grange – all time classics! The other massive advantage is you don't have to swap around baits from summer to winter (which I did do for

From paste to stick mix



1 When the frozen paste reaches room temperature, break it into several smaller pieces



2 Roll the pieces into thick sausage shapes, then wrap them individually in cling film



3 Immerse the cling-film-wrapped sausages in boiling water



4 Boil for eight minutes



Mix with Cell bait dip to make a potent stick mix

10



5 Take the sausages out of the cling film – be careful not to burn yourself as they retain a lot of heat!



6 Break the sausages into smaller pieces and place in a food blender



7 Keep one of the sausages back, as it can be cut down to make various shaped hookbaits



8 Give the blender a blast for a few minutes to form the crumb



9 Make sure its a nice fine crumb with no big bits remaining

years, by the way) – another lesson learned.

Top the freezer up, and go for a bulk bait deal which includes everything you will need for the coming months. I know not everyone can afford a bulk deal, but a kilo of bait in any tackle shop will cost a tenner, so 10kg would be £100, plus pop-ups, dip, etc. Kent Particles, on the other hand, will roll the Cell fresh to order in any size from 10mm to 24mm (I don't know of anyone else who will roll fresh 10mm baits at the same price as the larger sizes). Also in one of their deals you get white-coloured, Cell-flavoured pop-

ups (the most effective winter colour in my opinion) or matching Cell coloured pop-ups (whichever you prefer), Cell dip, and most importantly, half a kilo of paste. All in, and delivered to your door for well under £100 – £87.50 in fact!

I know plenty of anglers who would shell out several hundred quid on a shiny new pod, and then buy the cheapest crap bait they can get their hands on. They must be mad! My advice is get some value for money – a bulk deal of bait from Kent Particles, maximising your chance of catching consistently over the colder

months. Forget about asking the missus or parents for the shiny pod and use Crimbo to sort out your winter bait. If you can get a bulk deal as a Christmas pressie it's even cheaper... in fact it's free! Check out the Cell at www.mainline-baits.com and Kent Particles www.kentparticles.co.uk to get it rolled fresh to order.

Maximum attraction

Paste can be used in a variety of ways to enhance your hookbait, wrapping it around the hookbait being most common. What I like to do is steam it in sections and then use some of it for high-flavour steamed hookbaits. The remainder of it is used to make a perfect, simple winter stick mix. See my stick mix step-by-step sequence.

The 10mm baits, along with another size to keep 'em guessing, is the way forward at any time of year. From an angling point of view, in winter you can introduce more smaller food items into the swim, keeping the fish there, feeding and looking for bait for longer periods, rather than eating a few 20mm baits and nothing else for another 24 hours. In the colder months 10mm baits mixed in with a few 14mm is much more appealing. From a financial point of view, it stands to reason that you get more boilies for your money in a smaller size – ideal for keeping the bait going in all winter without breaking the bank. By continuing to put the bait in well into the colder months, the likelihood is the fish will keep responding and the venue will continue to produce, rather than slip away from everyone until March or April. It's not long before the carp shut up shop when everyone starts firing singles at them and no bait goes in.

Hookbait package

The seven-fish session mentioned earlier was the most recent of only a handful of times this year that I decided to use a stick mix. I had used the chod rig almost exclusively over the past year or so, but as the session was late autumn/early winter with a nice south-westerly pushing down

the lake, I wanted a spread of bait over a fairly wide area in conjunction with some real pulling power to the hookbait in the deep, open water. I decided to go for a two-bait stringer with a snowman hookbait comprising a Cell bottom bait and one of my bright white pop-ups, along with a potent stick mix. I put the small package together and checked out the combination in the margin. It looked ace on the bottom. Three of these packages were dispatched to the silt along with a kilo of mixed sized Cell freebies spread over the top. It turned out to be a winning method – on that occasion, at least!

The hookbait package can be set up with any normal hooklink material and hooking arrangement. I use an Armourbraid hooklink, which is slightly more supple than coated braid and a tad stiffer than a braided hooklink material, and the colour is ideal for fishing over silt. The hooklink itself is around eight inches long and the hook arrangement is a simple turn-and-catch hair rig comprising a blow-back ring and shrink-tube kicker on a size 8 Kurv hook. The hooklink can be attached to a lead clip, helicopter or inline set-up, whichever you prefer. The hookbait package sequence shows how to put the mouthful together. Fished with a scattering of free offerings or on its own, it's extremely eye catching and attractive on the lake bed.

In summary, it's the simple things that work best: simple rig, sharp hook, a little thought into bait application as well as the bait itself. Don't go cheap on bait, it really is most important, especially in the colder months. Have plenty of it at the ready for when the situation arises. Imagine fishing in February, you have caught a few already and the carp are feeding hard when you run out of bait. It doesn't bear thinking about. Get yourself out there this winter. With decent bait, lots of effort and a little luck you can catch regularly and catch see yourself in *Carp-Talk* with that big winter mirror!

Stringer and stick



1

Thread a PVA stick on to the hooklink and attach a snowman hookbait to the rig



2

Thread two boilies on to PVA tape, fold the end of the tape over several times for added strength, and push the hook through the centre of it



4

The finished package should look like this



3

Slide the PVA stick down the hooklink, pulling the hook into it