

WINTER BAITS



ANGLER FILE

LEWIS READ

Age: 38
Nickname: Harry Potter and Mavis
UK PB: 47lb 12oz
Sponsors: Gardner Tackle and Carp Company

LEWIS READ explains how to suit the baits you use to the cold conditions and catch more carp as a result.

For the vast majority of anglers, adapting, or completely changing, the baits they use for the winter months will result in more bites. The low water temperatures have a huge affect on how a bait behaves. That is, how much attraction it leaches into the water and how effective it is at inducing carp into feeding, as well as altering the carp's behaviour and feeding habits. Ensuring the baits you are using fall into line with these changes is paramount.



There is an endless number of baits at your disposal for your next session, so read on to find out which will bring you the results that you're after.

Lower water temperatures cause a carp's metabolism to slow down, which affects its ability to digest certain baits or bait ingredients, and its basic requirement to maintain its metabolic rate. They simply do not need to eat as much to maintain condition.

It is important for the carp to be able to digest the baits they eat because otherwise their digestive system will become blocked. When this has happened the carp effectively shuts down and stops feeding. I imagine it would be like you having the worst stomachache imaginable; the last thing you would want to do is sit down to a dinner that you don't need.

It's not until the water temperatures rise in spring that they can unclog themselves and return to normal. It therefore follows that if the carp in your water are fed baits they can't digest properly, they will stop feeding throughout winter and bites will be few and far between.

Historically, a fishmeal boilie was thought of as a less viable option for cold-water fishing because the



Carp alter their feeding habits during winter and you need to adapt your baits to suit to cash in on the action.

fishmeals that they contained were less refined and much higher in fat than those used nowadays. In cold water carp have more difficulty in digesting and passing fats through their system, and this is one of the main culprits for blocking the carp's digestive system.

This rings true with pellets just as much as boilies, which I'll touch on later. I do favour a fishmeal-based bait throughout winter, but one based

Total Tip

Purchase pop-ups that match the boilies you're using and leave them soaking in an amino-based dip. These make excellent single hook baits and will go largely unnoticed by the bird life.



Use boilies with a high degree of soluble ingredients.

on low-temperature fishmeals and fish extracts that are more refined and contain less fat. Baits with a high degree of soluble ingredients are another good winter option. Rather than the heavy, milk-protein-based boilies that were popular in the 1990s, the more soluble milk proteins such as calcium caseinate and certain calf-milk powders are far better ingredients because they're easily digested and aren't affected by the low temperatures.

Ideally, you want to feed the fish a bait that they find very attractive, get some nutritional benefit from and that can be easily digested. The addition of soluble ingredients also helps the attractors seep out of the boilie in the cold water.

While the correct type of boilie is an excellent winter bait, and what I use for a lot of my fishing, there are so many other effective baits out there.

Peperami is a well-publicised winter bait and, although it has a high fat content, it uses animal fats that are very refined and don't seem to clog the fish up. The magic 'Rami' is normally used in small quantities, and not fed

Total Tip

Avoid using baits with a high oil content through the winter. The oils congeal in cold water, restricting the release of attraction and the carp cannot digest these baits properly in cold water.



loose, which reduces the chance of the fat content having a negative effect on the fish.

Then there's the great maggot, which is a contender for the best, most-consistent winter bait that there is. Essentially, a maggot is liquid protein contained within a skin and you really couldn't have a bait more suited to winter carping. These have reigned supreme on any carp venue that doesn't contain a large head of nuisance fish. Maggots have come in for a bit of stick recently, unfairly I think, with ideas that they don't offer any nutrition. I don't believe this. I have seen carp in peak condition in waters that are dominated by maggots. The fish certainly get some nutritional value from them and they're the perfect winter bait, being small, easily digestible and perfectly suited to a fine presentation. Whether they are fished on a small Mugga hook and 'mag-aligned' or as a bunch tied to a rig ring on a hair and balanced with a bit of buoyant foam so that it just sinks, you can't go far wrong.

Particle baits don't have a strong reputation for being an effective winter bait these days, but I remember many years ago when Kevin Maddocks completely dominated the legendary Redmire Pool using tiger nuts. I've seen single peanuts be the key to consistent action on extremely tricky venues, so, despite popular consensus of opinion, I believe that there's a lot of scope in certain particles.

Bread is a cheap and incredibly effective winter bait. Liquidised bread makes a perfect stick mix and, providing it's compressed in the PVA, it 'explodes' on the lake bed, giving a lovely visual area with your hook bait sat right in the middle. However, you must use fresh bread because dry, stale bread doesn't behave in the same

TRY THESE BAITS THIS WINTER



BAIT 1 Small, 10mm or 12mm boilies developed for use in cold water.



BAIT 2 Maggots either on their own or in conjunction with other baits.



BAIT 3 Single, dark hook baits soaked in an amino-based plug.



BAIT 4 Perameri as a hook bait and small slivers added to a PVA bag.



BAIT 5 Sweetcorn makes an excellent feed and hook bait. It's cheap too.



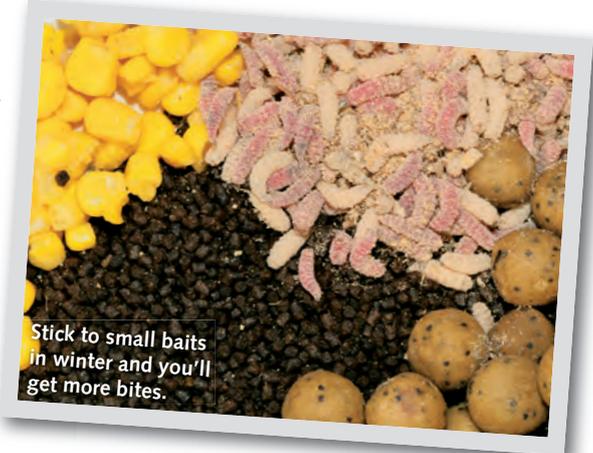
BAIT 6 Liquidised bread makes the perfect winter PVA stick/bag mix.

manner. It's always worth carrying some in winter because even a tiny PVA bag creates a very visual point of attraction. I also mix boilie crumb with it for extra attraction, or spray on small amounts of bait soak to match my hook baits when trying to nick a bonus bite.

Pellets play a very small role in my winter fishing because I sometimes fish venues that are home to a large head of pellet-loving bream. They are a great attractor for all species, including carp, but you will be pestered by other species when using them. If you do want to incorporate pellets into your approach then use the tiny, dot pellets, and very sparingly at that, especially if they contain a lot of oil. There are low-oil carp/coarse pellets available but I haven't really used these so wouldn't like to comment on their effectiveness. I have seen anglers soak their pellets in amino-based liquids, or other glugs that don't emulsify in the cold. Soak any bait in a liquid that does emulsify in cold water, as certain oils do, and it'll create a skin around the bait, seriously inhibiting the leaching of attraction into the water.

It's worth glugging your winter baits to enhance their attraction because you only want to be using very small amounts, so the more attraction you can pack into a little pile or scattering of baits the better.

You should not use a lot of bait throughout winter, unless fishing in peak feeding conditions. For instance, if you're fishing towards the end of winter, as the water temperatures begin to rise, when the fish are coming out



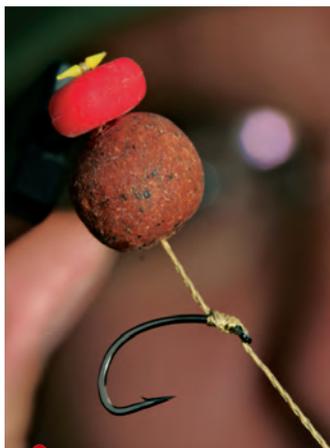
Stick to small baits in winter and you'll get more bites.

of their semi-dormant states and are willing to put their heads down and feed hard, then using a decent amount of bait could be beneficial. For the most part, however, and especially throughout the middle of winter, you are better off baiting sparingly during your session and putting any leftover bait in at the end.

Single hook baits are an often talked about, and used, winter method and you get two opposing camps with regard to them. Some like the brightly coloured fluoro baits, and whether their effectiveness is purely down to visibility or a combination of factors I'm unsure, but there's no doubting that they work. The other side of the coin is the use of dark baits that are heavily glugged so that they emit a strong food signal. Although something like a pineapple pop-up will give off plenty of attraction, it's not necessarily something the carp recognise as a food source that they've fed on before.

I often use a pop-up that matches the boilies I use all year round, but leave them soaking in a matching Minamino dip so that they're fully impregnated by the time I cast them out.

FOUR METHODS FOR BALANCING YOUR HOOK BAITS



1 Tip a simple bottom bait with a piece of buoyant, plastic corn.



2 Try a snowman rig, which consists of a bottom bait and a small pop-up.



3 Pinch a shot on the hair below a pop-up so that it only just sinks.



4 Insert a length of non-toxic wire into a pop-up so that it sinks slowly.

You must bear in mind that some dips/glugs weigh more than water, and pop-ups soaked in these liquids will lose some of their buoyancy. As the liquid leaches out of the bait in the water the pop-up will become more buoyant (essentially weigh less as the liquid escapes from the bait), especially if they are cork-ball pop-ups. Should you be critically balancing the baits before casting out you must take this into account by overweighting the pop-up slightly or reeling in after an hour or two to check that the bait is not sitting straight up off the lead.

Not only do these baits say 'come and eat me' to the carp, but a dark bait is much harder for the bird life to locate. Certain presentations can be picked up by the birds and dropped and they'll still be fishing effectively, such as a chod rig. However, the presentation of many rigs will be ruined once a bird has picked up the hook bait, meaning repeated recasts and far more disturbance than you want.

In winter, smaller baits become more effective. This is primarily down to the way that the carp feed, but the fact that many anglers use small baits in winter, so it's what the carp are used to eating, also has an impact. The carp's appetite is far smaller and they feed slower in cold water. As such, they seem less inclined to pick up a large bait. Thinking about it, it could also have something to do with a handful of small baits having a far greater surface area than the same weight of large baits, therefore allowing more attraction to be released.



Something I've used to great effect in winter is to make my own boilies, but I boil the sausages of paste that I have pumped out of my Sausage Gun. Instead of rolling them into boilies, I chop the sausages into small, dumbbell-shaped baits. The attraction and flavour leakage from the ends of these dumbbells is massive, because there is no skin for the attraction to penetrate. You can trim the skin off a boilie for a similar effect, but the unrolled paste is less compressed. This, combined with the open ends, allows a huge amount of flavour leakage.

There will be times during winter when the fishing can be very slow just because the carp aren't feeding. In this case, whatever bait you choose isn't going to work. If you find a method and bait that works when conditions are relatively conducive to getting a bite, then you will be able to fish with the confidence that you are in prime position to capitalise on every possible chance when they do want a snack.

NEXT MONTH

Now that you know which rigs and baits to use, Lewis reveals the tactics that will ensure you enjoy plenty of action this winter, no matter how cold it gets. January 2010 issue on sale December 24th, 2009.



Find a bait that works, stick with it and you'll be in a position to capitalise on every opportunity.