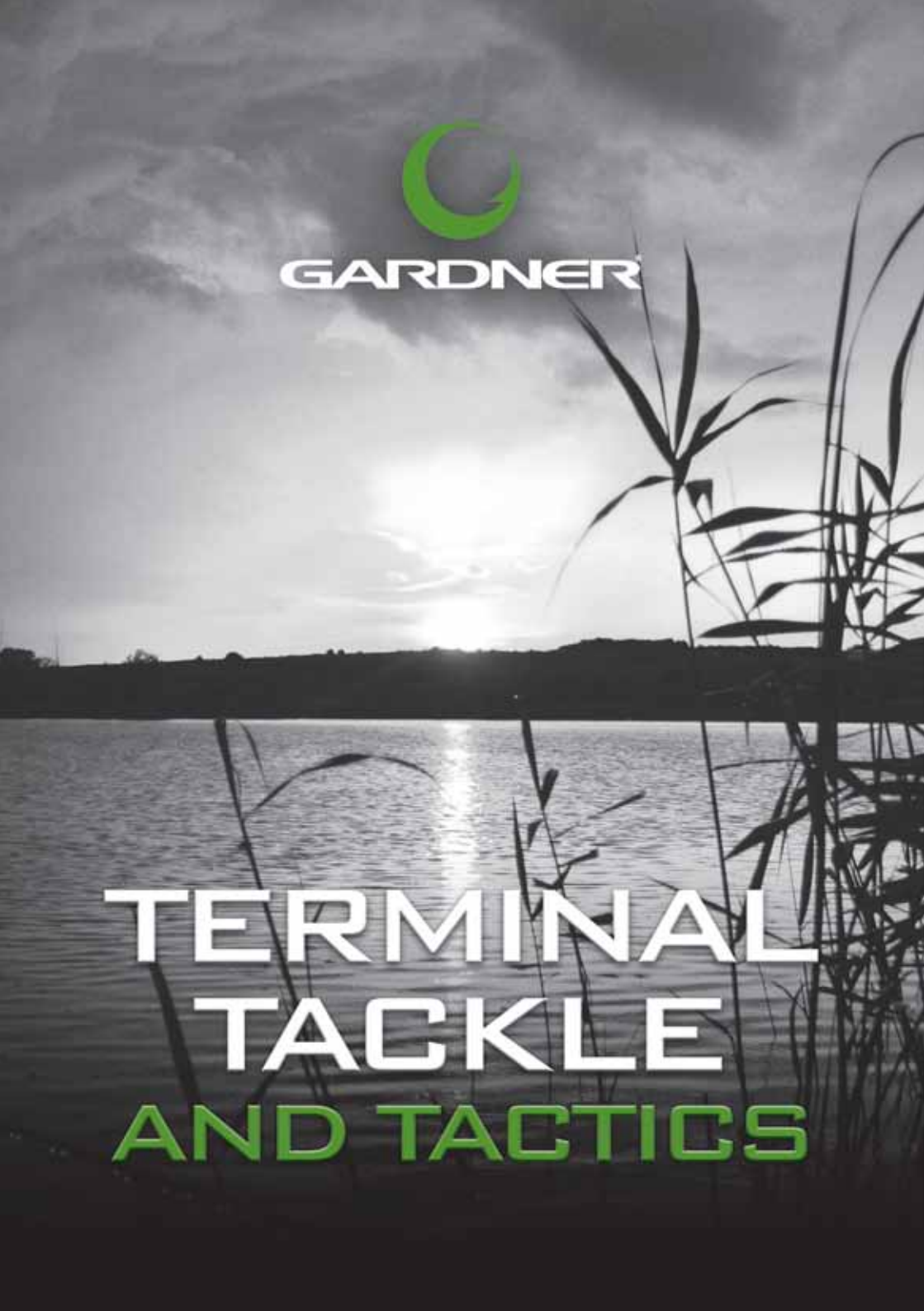
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TACKLE
AND TACTICS

MAKE YOUR MARK

BRIGHTER FOR LONGER

SUPER LUMINESCENT MARKER LIQUID

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CONTENTS

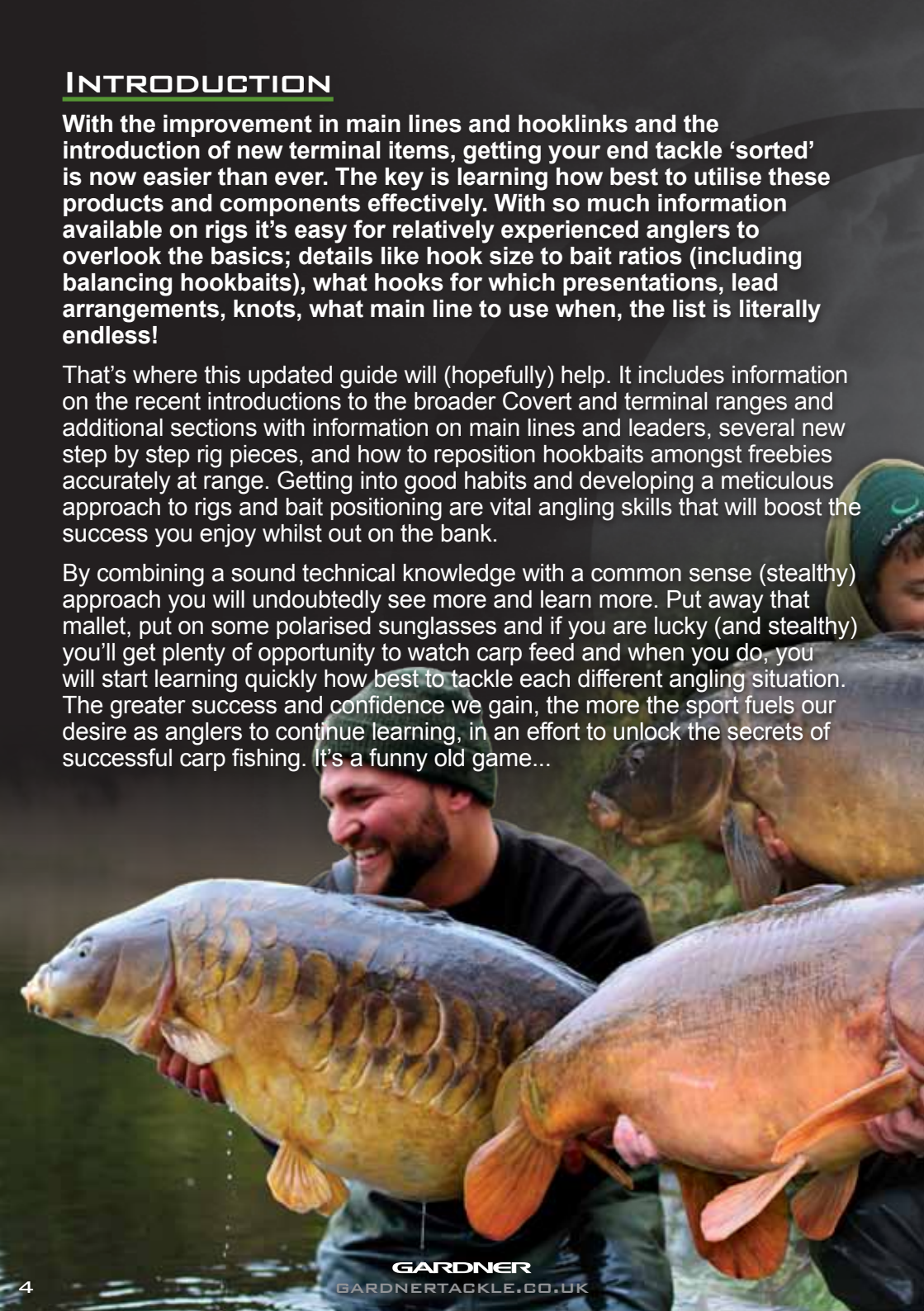
RIG SECTION

Introduction

With the improvement in main lines and hooklinks and the introduction of new terminal items, getting your end tackle 'sorted' is now easier than ever. The key is learning how best to utilise these products and components effectively. With so much information available on rigs it's easy for relatively experienced anglers to overlook the basics; details like hook size to bait ratios (including balancing hookbaits), what hooks for which presentations, lead arrangements, knots, what main line to use when, the list is literally endless!

That's where this updated guide will (hopefully) help. It includes information on the recent introductions to the broader Covert and terminal ranges and additional sections with information on main lines and leaders, several new step by step rig pieces, and how to reposition hookbaits amongst freebies accurately at range. Getting into good habits and developing a meticulous approach to rigs and bait positioning are vital angling skills that will boost the success you enjoy whilst out on the bank.

By combining a sound technical knowledge with a common sense (stealthy) approach you will undoubtedly see more and learn more. Put away that mallet, put on some polarised sunglasses and if you are lucky (and stealthy) you'll get plenty of opportunity to watch carp feed and when you do, you will start learning quickly how best to tackle each different angling situation. The greater success and confidence we gain, the more the sport fuels our desire as anglers to continue learning, in an effort to unlock the secrets of successful carp fishing. It's a funny old game...

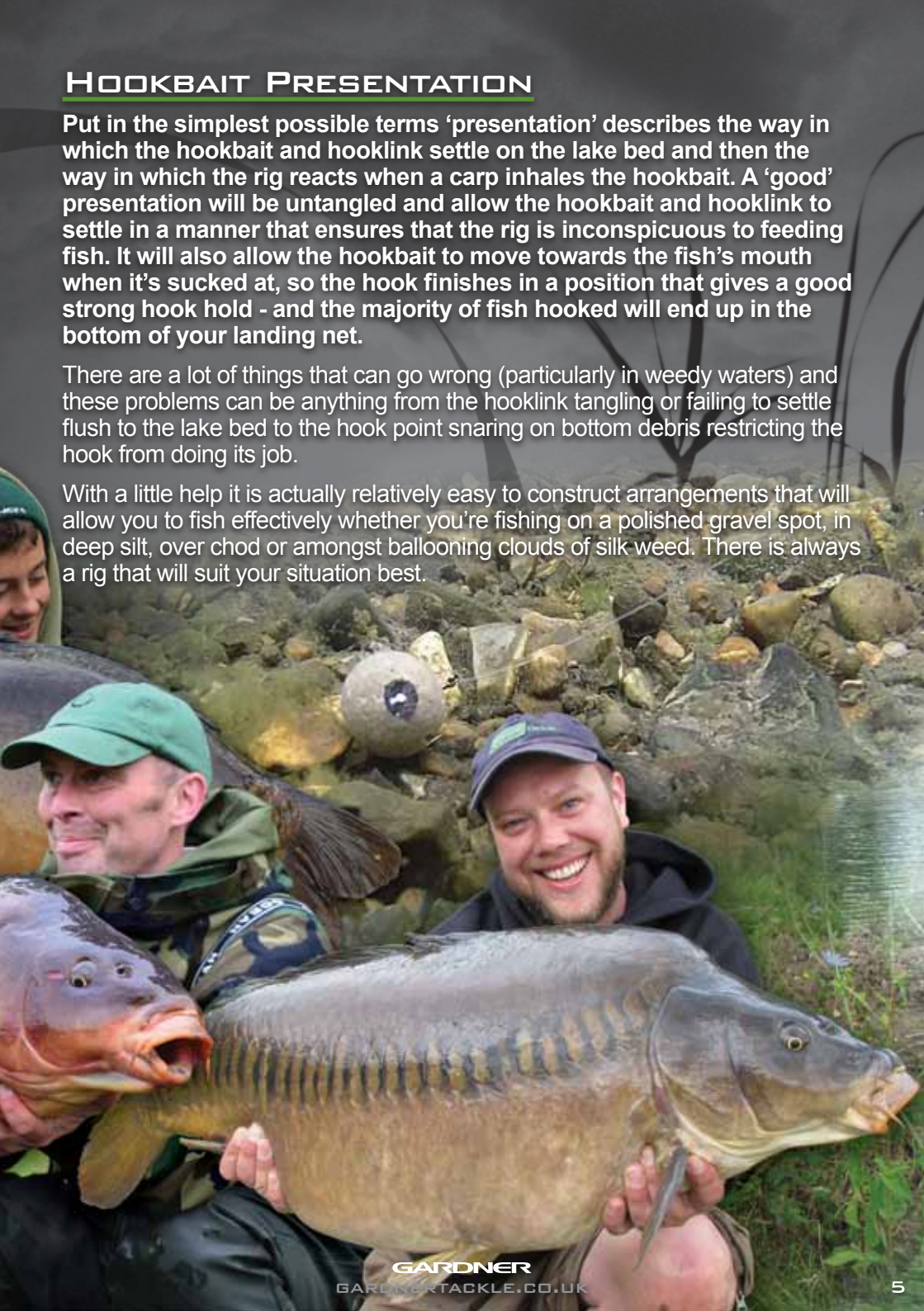


Hookbait Presentation

Put in the simplest possible terms 'presentation' describes the way in which the hookbait and hooklink settle on the lake bed and then the way in which the rig reacts when a carp inhales the hookbait. A 'good' presentation will be untangled and allow the hookbait and hooklink to settle in a manner that ensures that the rig is inconspicuous to feeding fish. It will also allow the hookbait to move towards the fish's mouth when it's sucked at, so the hook finishes in a position that gives a good strong hook hold - and the majority of fish hooked will end up in the bottom of your landing net.

There are a lot of things that can go wrong (particularly in weedy waters) and these problems can be anything from the hooklink tangling or failing to settle flush to the lake bed to the hook point snaring on bottom debris restricting the hook from doing its job.

With a little help it is actually relatively easy to construct arrangements that will allow you to fish effectively whether you're fishing on a polished gravel spot, in deep silt, over chod or amongst ballooning clouds of silk weed. There is always a rig that will suit your situation best.



Hooks

Before looking at individual hook patterns, it's worth considering the balance between the size of the hook and the bait. It's useful to think of this in terms of how you would present conventional small baits, such as maggots or sweet corn. You'd never think of mounting a couple of grains of corn on a great big size 4 hook! The same principle can be applied to carp rigs. 'Fining down' potentially makes the presentation more natural and this will invariably fool more fish; but the flip side is that you may need a bigger hook when fishing for large fish in weed or near snags. This makes the presentation less subtle, but using larger hooks improves the hooking potential of the rig, so there is a compromise to make. A little time and effort will show you when you have got the balance right.

Hook size

'Big hook' rigs are devastatingly effective when combined with a buoyant hookbait (see rigs section); essentially the weight of the hook is nullified by the buoyancy.

Try combining a small pop-up bait with a large hook so that it sinks very slowly. This is a really effective method that combines the subtlety of a bottom bait presentation, with the increased hooking potential of a bigger hook.

At the other end of the scale a smaller hook can be used and efficiency maintained by increasing the length of the hair. The longer hair allows greater separation between the hook and hookbait and this movement means the hook can find a stronger hold unimpaired.

The Gardner Tackle hook range encompasses seven dedicated hook patterns. We believe that between them they cater for virtually all of the carp and specimen angler's riggy needs.

Mugga and Continental Mugga Hooks

For over a decade, this benchmark hook design has given anglers unsurpassed hook holds thanks to the combination of a super sharp straight point, a curved shank and an aggressive in-turned eye that forces the hook to rotate the moment the hooklink tightens. Then when the hook has taken hold the alignment between eye and point keeps the hook in. Muggas can be used with either pop-up or bottom bait presentations and work superbly with a wide range of hooklink materials.

The Continental Mugga Hooks use a 30% stronger wire and are perfectly suited to fishing for big fish in the most challenging of angling situations.

Longshank Mugga Hooks

The Longshank Mugga hook has proven to be a tremendously successful pattern, with big carp all across Europe falling foul of it. The long sweeping curved shank makes it extremely effective in terms of how the hook reacts in the carp's mouth and the strong hook holds it gives. When used in conjunction with either pop-ups or semi-buoyant hookbaits these hooks are perfect for use in advanced rigs. And are particularly suited for use with the ruthlessly efficient 360° rig.

Chod Hooks

These are perfect hooks for use on Chod, Clone and Hinged Stiff rigs. The 15° out-turned eye ensures that the hooklink exits the eye at the optimum angle and this in turn ensures that the straight point can take a secure hold in the carp's mouth and stay there. These hooks feature a relatively wide gape and a strong forged wire which ensures they can be used confidently in the most demanding angling situations.

Talon Tip Hooks

The original Gardner carp hook, the Talon Tip, is famed for offering rock solid hook holds thanks to the combination of a 15° in-turned eye, a reverse bend, medium length shank and sharp beaked point. The pattern is made using an extra strong forged wire which ensures incredible reliability. The beaked point helps hold the hook point in place initially, and then guides the hook into a secure hold as it penetrates completely.

Wide Gape Talon Tip Hooks

This pattern naturally evolved from the original Talon Tip. We removed the offset and kept the same combination of strong wire and beaked point with a 5° in-turned eye to ensure the best possible penetration, without increasing the lateral forces that could cause weaker hooks to open out during the early stages of a battle. The wider gape offers the benefit of increased hooking power by allowing the hook point to be set further away from the hook eye.

Incizor Hooks

There is a lot more to the pattern than is apparent at first glance. The long straight point is angled slightly in towards the medium length shank and this feature ensures that the Incizor creates extremely secure hook holds. This amazingly versatile pattern can be used in combination with a soft braid like Trickster Heavy, Fluorocarbon, monofilament or a skinned hooklink. For soft hooklinks simply add a Covert Hook Aligner or in-turned shrink tube kicker, to make the finished rig react faster when the hookbait is taken.

Longshank Incizor Hooks

The combination of an amazingly sharp etched point and balanced wire gauge means the Long Shank Incizor stands out from the crowd! The pattern combines the versatility and benefits of an Incizor with the mechanical advantages of a longer shank. This means the hook turns and takes hold further inside the carp's mouth culminating in superb penetration and super strong hook holds.

For more detailed information on the Gardner hook range please visit gardnertackle.co.uk

Perfect Points

Always remember one absolutely critical point, the one on your hook!

After reeling in or after every capture, carefully check the hook point for visible blunting using an eye loupe like the Gardner 'Eye'. Then test the point by gently touching the point on your finger nail. If the hook slides it is blunt. Try sharpening the hook using a Gardner Point Dr. These are a great accessory for bringing an 'almost sharp' hook back up to scratch.

The hook point isn't only critical in relation to the initial pricking, but it also ensures the best penetration and a secure hook hold.

Point Dr.'s

The Point Dr. sharpening tools are the easiest way to bring your hook points back up to scratch if they have just lost that vital edge. So if you do the nail test and you have even the slightest doubt about the point then you can use one of these abrasive rubberised blocks to buff the point back up to the high standard required to ensure your carefully constructed rigs work as they should.

The forgiving nature of the material means that you're far less likely to turn your hook point over, an occurrence that is easy to do with a pillar file. We do not claim that the Point Dr.'s achieve the same effect, so if you need to totally remodel the hook point only a file or stone will realistically take off enough metal to make this possible.

The original grey coloured Point Dr. is very gentle, and is best used for polishing away the plating or coating on the hook point and smoothing out the grooving left on the hook when you use a file.

The red 'Point Dr. 2' has a slightly firmer texture and an elevated degree of abrasive which means it will work a little quicker and take the plating off much quicker than the gentler grey version. The stiffer feel means some customers find it easier to control the strokes, and we have feedback from customers that are fans of both models.

Coming Soon - Covert Dark

The current Covert hook ranges are undergoing something of a transformation during the coming months! The key patterns are being given a facelift that includes longer sharper points, micro barbs and an amended plated finish, that has been developed to ensure the hooks are sharper. There are no circumstances where a hook can be too sharp; and as carpers we know that the overall effectiveness of all the carp rigs we use really do rely on that point being absolutely *razor* sharp. Keep your eyes peeled for Covert Dark!

Hooklinks

Consistent presentation relies upon how the way a baited rig settles, the rig's camouflage and how it behaves and reacts to fish sucking at the hooklink. All of these key attributes are affected by the type of material used, as well as the length and breaking strain of hooklink.

There's a huge variety of materials available, enough to confuse even experienced anglers, so we will offer a brief insight into the uses and benefits of the main types commonly used by carp and specialist anglers today.

Skinned Hooklinks

Skinned hooklinks are immensely popular, which isn't surprising when you consider the enormous variety of rigs that can be constructed using them. They offer all the advantages of a soft braid but without the tangles. The skin also helps the hooklink sink faster and makes it more robust as it offers the braided inner a little extra protection should the link come into contact with a submerged obstacle.

The colour and texture of the outer skins and braided inners varies between products and within the Gardner Range you will find that the Sly Skin and Disruption hooklinks are slightly stiffer than the Chod and Sink Skins. If you're looking for a really supple skinned hooklink then look no further than our new Ultra Skin. All these materials offer subtle variations in colours and this means you will be able to find one to match the lake bed of the water where you are angling.

Suitable for almost any modern rig including pop-up and bottom bait rigs, there is little wonder skins are probably used by more anglers than any other hooklink today. They are incredibly versatile!

Braided Hooklinks

Uncoated braids, like our Trickster, offer unsurpassed limpness that essentially gives the hookbait freedom of movement and allows the hook to twist uninhibited in the fish's mouth. These hooklinks also settle differently to stiffer materials, as the hookbait often settles near the lead. This means that the hookbait can move unhindered when being sucked into the fish's mouth.

The perfect hooklink braid should sink flush to the lake bed, be smooth to the touch and ultra limp, have a low diameter and be nicely camouflaged against a number of lake beds. If there is one downside, it would be that you need to take measures to combat tangles. The easiest way is to simply add a small bag or 'stringer' of boilies and watch the rig in flight. Job done!

The subtlety that braided hooklinks offer make them an extraordinarily effective option and they are the first choice for many anglers looking for an edge, as they seem to have been forgotten by many anglers.

Monofilaments – Copolymer and Fluorocarbon

Monofilament hooklinks can range from a simple section of main line taken from your fishing reel, through to specialised materials made with very specific purpose characteristics; ranging from very soft low memory monofilaments like HydroFlex, through to stiffer materials like Trick-link or our super stiff 'high memory' Trip Wire.

In recent years pure Fluorocarbons, like Mirage and Subterfuge have become increasingly popular, largely because of the density of the material and the fact that it's virtually invisible when submerged. Different varieties of Fluorocarbon offer different degrees of stiffness and as such can be used for many different rig applications.

All monofilaments are a great alternative to braided hooklinks as they are less prone to tangling and they hold the hook in a set position (in relation to the hooklink). Reducing tangles makes a big difference to your results and this may be particularly noticeable if you are fishing at long range.

If the fish in your water are being fished for with braided or skinned hooklinks, then maybe a change to a monofilament hooklink will make a difference.

Lead Arrangements

The different lead systems allow us to tailor the way in which the rig is presented on the lake bed, and how the rig will perform when a carp picks up the hookbait. If you choose the wrong lead arrangement you could end up with the rig being dragged down into soft silt rendering the presentation near useless. Understanding how each one works and how to get the most from them is vital to ensuring the best possible presentation.

Running leads

The 'simplest' running lead offers some major benefits over semi fixed leads in some circumstances. Realistically, there is still enough resistance to make the hook point nick the fish's mouth but the reduced resistance can mean that the fish don't always bolt off violently straight away, so it's a great arrangement if you're fishing near to snags.

Another advantage of a running rig is on heavily pressured venues where the fish are accustomed to dealing with standard sized fixed leads. The movement between the rig and the lead (as the lead slides) makes it very hard for them to shake the hook out, using the weight.

Semi Fixed Leads

Creating a safe semi-fixed lead arrangement can be a little hit and miss. In the past we've used all manner of bits of tubing or even backstops to create a bolt effect, normally in a 'safe' way, that ensures the lead will separate and slide off down the main line in the event of the line cutting or breaking. There has been a recent change in mind set, as anglers are more aware that needlessly dumping leads into lakes is both environmentally questionable and expensive. With this in mind, we have introduced a simple system that's easy to set up and offers control on the pressure needed to cause the components to separate.

The new Covert Lead-Safe System uses a clip body and tail rubber to retain the swivel in a similar way to the mechanics of a conventional lead clip. The biggest difference is that the lead slides on the main line after the components separate.

If you're angling on venues that are weed free or hooking on PVA bags (that can cause lead clips to discharge the lead as they hit the water) the Lead-Safe System is a stunningly simple and highly effective method of creating safe rigs.

Lead Clip Arrangements

Lead Clip arrangements are still hugely popular, as losing the lead can be a great benefit in heavy weed but they are also convenient when you simply want to change the lead. Covert Lead Clips allow the angler to control the force required to discharge the lead by simply adjusting how far the tail rubber is pushed onto the back of the clip.

To ensure the lead discharges correctly the lead clip must hold onto the swivel. The Covert Lead Clip uses an internal ridge that grips the swivel eye and is therefore very easy to use. You just pull the size 8 swivel back into the Lead Clip until it clicks into place.

Lead clip systems can be used over almost any type of lake bed. By using the lightest possible lead and lengthening the hooklink you can maintain excellent presentation over light weed or silt. Conversely, on hard spots using a short hooklink and Flat Pear Bomb will maximise the resistance, giving the most efficient bolt effect.

Helicopter Rigs

As these rigs fly 'lead first' they are fantastic for long range fishing. With the lead on the end and the hooklink set a few inches above it, these rigs offer excellent presentation on almost any type of lake bed. On firm lake beds the top bead is set just an inch away from the lead, adjusting the bead as required will stop the hooklink being dragged into silt or weed. The Chod Rig is based on the same principle and we all know how well that works!

A word of warning, a poorly constructed Helicopter Rig, whether tied using leadcore or a fused loop style leader, can be dangerous. The golden rule is always that, in the event of the main line breaking, the top bead must be able to pull up off the leader allowing the hooklink and leader to separate. We recommend using a short section of Covert XT Silicone Tubing as a stop with a Covert Safety Bead. These beads are made from a flexible rubber compound and have a tapered inner bore that has been designed specifically for this purpose.

Inline leads

A nice 'clean' spot on the lake bed is great for hookbait presentation but it also makes it much easier for the fish to identify the terminal tackle and then deal with the rig if they make a mistake. This is when the high resistance of an inline lead really comes into its own. Both the Inline Bolt Bomb and Gardner Flat Pear Inline Leads offer a rock solid anchor point for your rig, which will enhance how it works in this scenario.

Inline leads and short braided hooklinks have proved devastating when dropped with a couple of handfuls of particle or pellet from a boat (or bait boat). Of course they are just as effective when cast from the bank, but be careful to watch that the rig doesn't tangle in flight. This problem is easily solved by hooking on a small Micromesh style PVA bag, as the added weight and resistance created by the PVA bag dramatically reduces tangling.

If you're fishing amongst thick weed, it's easy to adapt the inline leads to 'drop off' by running the line or leader around the outside of the lead.

Main Lines

There are three basic groups of main line; namely copolymers, Fluorocarbons and braided lines and each group can have their own variations as well. The choice of which one suits your angling best, can be bewildering for many anglers, so we'll summarise the main benefits and uses of each major group to try and help you decide which is best for your own style of fishing.

Copolymers

When we think of a 'normal' fishing line it is generally a copolymer (monofilament). By definition these lines are manufactured by extruding and then drawing out a molten mixture of plastics. It is this 'drawing out' process that creates a thin line and that aligns the molecules, giving the line its inherent high linear and knot strength for any given diameter. Differences in mixtures, additives and pigments means that there is a massive choice in main lines manufactured in this manner.

All copolymers cast extremely well and should sink nicely as the basic mix used in their manufacture is heavier than water. Small differences in terms of a line's feel makes a big difference to us anglers and the balance between all the aspects of a line's performance; including its stretch characteristics, suppleness, diameter, knot strength and abrasion resistance all have impacts upon one another.

For more information related to Gardner Tackle's range of copolymers visit gardnertackle.co.uk

Fluorocarbon

Fluorocarbon line is an extruded monofilament, the material used in it's manufacture is called 'Polyvinylidene Fluoride'. It originated as commercial sea fishing line that was sold on the basis of its low visibility in water and its durability. The material is significantly denser than the benchmark copolymer lines and it is this that offers the greatest tangible benefit to coarse and carp anglers as it sinks quickly, lying flush to the lake bed. Yes, it has a refractive index close to that of water, but in reality this is meaningless as it tends to attract suspended particles in the water that build up on its surface. If it's down on the lake bed this doesn't really matter though. It also has lower stretch than other monofilament style lines and gives greater feedback when feeling the lead down onto the lake bed.

The inherent density is the reason that Fluorocarbon lines do not cast as well as copolymers. As line leaves the spool of a reel it creates a cone (widest point just in front of the reel) that then gets pulled up and through the butt eye on your rod; but the weight of the Fluoro means this cone of line flying off the spool is greatly exaggerated and it is this that causes the dreaded 'frap' and not the 'stiffness'.

The density of the material also makes it robust; as a simple demonstration try biting through similar diameter copolymer and Fluorocarbon lines, the Fluoro is harder indicating it's more durable. It's more expensive than copolymers, but it's also harder wearing and this balances out the slightly higher cost of spooling up with a line like Mirage.

A few good 'habits' will help keep your Fluoro more manageable. Try to keep on top of line twist (**see line twist section*) and stretch it out after you first load it onto your reels, this will help to keep it performing as expected. Also slightly under filling your reel spools makes the line easier to handle and stops it falling off the spool at inopportune moments. The addition of a few drops of Fluoro Plus helps to keep it clean and reduce friction as you cast (also helping to prolong its life span).

Braided Main Lines

Dyneema lines offer unrivalled strength for each diameter, thanks to the high performance fibres used in their construction. This means that these lines can attain amazing strength at low diameters and when it comes to fishing at really extreme ranges, anglers can fit a lot more line on their reels and fish much further out. Some anglers have run hookbaits out 500 to 600 meters on some of the huge waters in Europe!

Pure Dyneema lines, like the 'Kinetic' braids, are extremely low stretch and are 'neutrally' buoyant. This means that if you fish a tight line with very heavy indicators, the line lays in a straight line from your rod tip to the lead (or to the nearest underwater feature) and bite indication will be amplified as a consequence of the line's inherent low stretch.

It is this low stretch that makes the line ideal for feature finding when using a bare lead or marker float arrangement. It helps you to feel the way that the lead hits the lake bed after casting and helps transmit the texture and resistance, as you draw the weight back slowly across the substrate.

An important point regarding Dyneema braids is that conventional knots, such as the Palomar and Grinner, will offer poor knot strength; unlike a copolymer that would normally offer about 90-95%. Here at Gardner, we rate all our lines using standard knots, as few anglers know how to tie specialised braid knots. But If you do use a knot like a Bimini Twist, you can expect a huge increase in overall strength!

Blended Dyneema lines that include heavier fibres to make them sink, such as our HydroSink, provide an alternative for anglers that want to enjoy the benefits of a braid but want the main line to settle less conspicuously on the lake bed or draped over weed. Sinking braided main lines still present distinct advantages in terms of bite indication and immediate control, but naturally have a slightly higher diameter to equivalent test pure Dyneema lines.

Sometimes changing the colour or type of main line can be enough to catch the carp off guard, as they will usually be looking for the ones they see over and over again. In these circumstances, carp will often bump into lines that they would otherwise avoid, indicating they are not scared by the new line.

Managing Line Twist

Whether line twist has been created when loading your spools (no method gives truly twist free line) or from playing fish on a clutch and using a 'baitrunner' facility, severe line twist can make monofilament main lines unmanageable, as it constantly tries to coil back on itself. This problem can lead to miss casts 'fraps', poor line lay and tangled rigs. In extreme cases it can even weaken the main line, so it obviously needs to be monitored and managed.

If line twist has built up through the use of a clutch system, tying a Spin Doctor on and casting out a few times will allow the rotation of the weight, during the retrieve, to reduce the twist dramatically.

If line twist does occur in Fluorocarbon you will suffer more 'fraps' and miss casts. Using a Spin Doctor obviously takes out the twist, but it is also worth 'walking' the line out occasionally to keep it behaving properly.

Attach the end of the main line to a bivvy peg, open the bale arm and walk the line out across open ground. It's worth going a few rod lengths further than you intend to fish. Close the bale arm and tighten down to the bivvy peg and stretch it out a couple of times to reduce any inherent memory created by having it wound on the reel spools. You will find that the combination of managing the line twist and reducing the memory will help with smoother casts and improved accuracy.

Leaders

Incorporating a leader can serve a number of practical purposes; like pinning the last few feet of line down, adding a much higher degree of abrasion resistance or as a shock leader for extreme range casting. Here's a brief guide on the potential advantages of using different leader materials and when to consider using them.

Shock/Casting Leaders

Shock leaders are simply a long length of high breaking material that can withstand the extreme forces exerted during long range casting. As such they need to be long enough so that, with the lead in casting position, there are at least 2 full turns of the leader on the reel spool. They can be monofilament or constructed from Dyneema braids. Dyneema braids have a lower diameter and minimal stretch and this can add extra distance to your cast as all the force is transferred through to the lead. The other benefit of a braided leader is that the knot is very small.

The extreme range specialists in our team, recommend the nice brown coloured 35lb and 45lb Vigilante or the higher breaking strain Kinetic Braided Mainlines or the smooth 8 ply Spod Braid, as being perfect for this purpose.

Snag/abrasion Leaders

If you want to improve the strength and robustness of the last portion of your line, incorporating a high diameter monofilament leader is very effective. Nothing offers greater abrasion and sheer resistance than going thick, but it's not practical to use super thick reel line, so adding a thick leader is the easiest solution.

High diameter braid is better than thin braid and high diameter monofilament is better than thin line. It's that simple! Monofilaments tend to slide across wet wood better than nylon, so if you're fishing somewhere where your line is likely to come into contact with submerged wood, this is a solution worth considering. Harder monofilaments like Sure Shock tend to be more resiliant to cut offs, whilst softer ones are easier to tie and still offer a great margin of protection compared to thinner main line. 40lb to 60lb rated lines have proven popular for this purpose but in extreme circumstances even heavier monofilaments can be used.

Thicker specialist leader braids, especially those with low friction coatings like Vigilante, offer minimal stretch and higher abrasion resistance whilst maintaining an inconspicuous presence in the water.

Leadcore and Leadfree leaders

Short sections of leadcore have been widely used by carp anglers since the early '90s. Just the addition of a few feet helps pin down and disguise the last part of the line. Using leadcore, or the more recently introduced Camflex Leadfree, adds extra abrasion resistance and this can make the difference between landing or losing a fish.

In terms of safety, please use Leadcores and Leadfree leaders with good strong main lines. This is often overlooked but is undoubtedly the single most important factor when it comes to safety with these products.

Attaching Leaders – Where to start?

Here are a few knots that we suggest are worth learning for attaching leaders and an internet search will result in lots of useful information. You can also visit the Gardner Tackle website knot section for more detailed instructions.

- 'Figure of 8' Knot for loop to loop attachment of spliced and fused loop leaders to copolymer main lines.
- 'Mahin Knot' for attaching different diameter monofilaments.
- 'Tucked Blood Knot' for attaching looped leaders to Fluorocarbon.

Of course there are a lot of other knot options, but these are tried and tested knots that typically yield a reliable junction.

***Hint** - Always remember to practice tying and then test all your knots to make sure they are as strong as possible; after all, a poorly tied knot will seriously affect the basic performance of even the strongest main line.*

KNOTLESS KNOT AND SHARP HOOK RIG

Simple and effective...

Rather than jump in at the deep end, it's well worth starting off the rig section by looking at a highly effective yet simple arrangement that can be used on any venue with 100% confidence. The combination of a sharp hook and soft supple braided hooklink has accounted for thousands upon thousands of carp captures and will continue to do so where ever it is used!

Why? Well it's the subtlety of presentation and the fact that the hookbait tends to have unrestricted movement, which allows the bait to be inhaled by a feeding carp and then allows the hook to rotate freely (all of which is a complex description for basic good rig mechanics). The only down side of this type of rig is tangling, but why else do most of the best 'edge' fishermen use a simple braided rig? Because they see how effective it is, if it is dropped untangled on a spot, that's why.

By balancing hook size to the size of the hookbait and starting off with a relatively short hair (so the bend of the hook touches the hookbait) you can use a relatively short hooklink that enhances the bolt effect of the finished rig with a semi fixed lead arrangement. This rig is perfect for use with bottom baits and balanced bottom baits.

Soft braids don't kick the hookbait out and that is actually one of their strongest assets. If a fish approaches the hookbait from any direction and sucks at it, there will be free movement as the hookbait is likely to be virtually on top of the lead if you have cast the bait or dropped it from a boat. In fact, the only time the rig will be straight is if you straighten it by moving the lead.

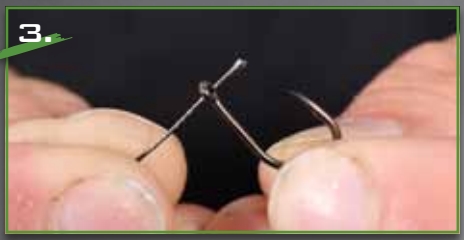
A few simple tweaks really help this type of rig work to its full potential. Always choose a soft sinking braid, and make sure that it lies flush to the lake bed by adding a tiny bit of Critical Mass Putty, to make sure that the coils of hooklink stay anchored to the lake bed.

To avoid tangles when casting, we recommend using a lead clip with some anti tangle tubing or the addition of a small PVA bag or stringer. Carefully watch the rig in flight to make sure it doesn't tangle and twist on the cast. Of course, it's easier if you're fishing in the edge or dropping your rig off a boat as then you can change the lead arrangement to suit i.e. a large flat inline lead and no tubing.

Finally, here's a little hint that will definitely help you land fish (with all 'hair' rigs) and that is to avoid the hair twisting on the hook shank. If you're adding a little PVA Micromesh bag or stringer leave a tag of PVA to wrap and trap the hair in place, to stop it twisting on the cast and if not, a simple overhand knot of PVA tape will do the job nicely. Just this little bit of effort will help to ensure the hook is free to penetrate unhindered and will give you the best and strongest possible hook holds.

You can't go wrong with a lovely soft hooklink like Trickster Heavy. Soft braids feel natural and allow the hook to turn whichever direction the carp approaches the bait.

Start off by tying a small Overhand Loop Knot in the end of the hooklink. This will form the hair and the loop will hold the boilie stop that retains the hookbait in place.



Cut off the excess from the loop knot and then cut off the required length. Allow a few inches more for knots and thread the end through the hook eye towards the point as shown (IMPORTANT).

The loop/hair should be positioned like this, allowing the right length for the hair. The hookbait should just touch the bend of the hook when finished.

Holding the hair and hook in position wrap the hooklink around the hook shank as shown. For the strongest results avoid the first wrap from being straight onto the join in the hooks eye.

A standard Knotless Knot works best with between 7 and 9 turns. This will vary slightly with different hook patterns, here we're using a Wide Gape Talon Tip so 8 wraps is perfect.

Finish off by threading the hooklink back through the eye ***towards the hook point***. The angle of pull this creates turns the hook towards the fishes bottom lip and keeps pulling the hook in.

A well tied Knotless Knot Rig will catch more than a poorly tied 'complex' rig. After that you can start experimenting with the hairs position, length and adding tubing/kickers.

COMBI RIG

Combi Rigs tied with a braided hook section and a nylon boom combine the benefits of a stiffer tangle free monofilament hooklink, with the freedom that the braided hook section gives the hook and hookbait in terms of movement. This manoeuvrability allows the hook to rotate freely and this means that whichever direction the fish approaches the bait, the hook can be inhaled cleanly. Then, as the hooklink tightens, the hook is free to turn and prick the carp's mouth unhindered. So it offers the best of both worlds!

Skinned hooklinks try to replicate the combination of the two materials used but in reality, there are key features of a Combi Rig that cannot be reproduced. For instance, a monofilament 'boom' is far less visible than a coated braid. They can be stiffer too, especially if you use a specialist stiff monofilament like Trip Wire or Stiff Subterfuge Fluorocarbon. A final distinct benefit of using two materials is that the hook section (just the last inch or two) is the active portion, so the hook reacts as soon as this section is tightened, rather than the complete hooklink. It is a mechanical reaction that can be further enhanced by moulding a lump of Critical Mass Putty around the Albright Knot.

If you fish this rig on a helicopter style lead arrangement, it is worth incorporating a loop to the swivel, so that the rig has a little free movement and can pivot at the base of the hooklink. This enables the stiff hooklink to settle flush to the lake bed and react unrestricted when sucked in by a browsing carp.

The neatest method of attaching the braided end section to the mono is with an Albright Knot. We recommend you practice and strength test this join before using it, as the last thing anyone wants is to have a knot fail, leaving just a hook section in a fish's mouth.

Start off using a normal hook and hair arrangement that you're confident with and develop it from there. We often use (and recommend) a blow back style rig as we like the way that the movement between the bait and hook is exaggerated. Essentially, using a blow back arrangement means the hook twists faster and with less resistance. By combining it with an aggressive hook, like a Mugga, you end up with a very effective rig.

Take off 6 inches of Trickster Heavy braid and tie a small loop in one end.

Cut off a small slither of Covert Silicone Tube (3mm) and slide it down the braid.

Take a size 6 Continental Mugga, push the hook point through the silicone and position the tubing opposite the barb.

With the hookbait in place to gauge length of hair, tie the hook on with a standard Knotless Knot.

Leave two inches of braid above the hook and connect it to some Subterfuge Stiff via an Albright Knot.

Trim the tag ends and then mould Critical Mass Putty around the knot, to make the rig react faster.

CLONE RIG

Now and again we may come up against carp that seem really tricky to hook. That's not because they are cleverer than other carp, it is simply because of the way in which they are feeding. Normally this is because they are keeping their mouths tight to the lake bed; where they carefully suck up the freebies, sifting out bottom debris and ejecting anything that's not edible or feels unnatural.

One of the most consistent ways of hooking carp feeding in this manner, is to mount a bottom bait or 'balanced' (slow sinking) hookbait on a 'Clone Rig'. By mounting the hookbait close to the eye of the hook on a 'D' it ensures that the hook enters the carp's mouth as soon as the bait is drawn in. The hook will naturally rotate, so the point drops down onto the bottom lip, giving very secure hook holds.

There are a number of methods for making balanced hookbaits; from rolling your own 'wafters' (by incorporating a small cork ball) to using a snowman setup with a small pop-up, a piece of foam or a piece of fake Enterprise Corn. Alternatively, drilling out the bait and plugging it with a piece of cork or Zig Rig Foam, works well with boilies and nut baits. When you have got this buoyancy right the rig will sink slowly and the hookbait will settle over the hook, which should lie flat on the bottom effectively hiding it from view.

D-rigs can be tied with almost any monofilament and there are several materials within the Gardner range that are perfectly suited; namely Trick-Link, Subterfuge and the higher breaking strains of Mirage. In terms of hook patterns we recommend a straight pointed hook, preferably with a straight or slightly out-turned eye, i.e. an Incizor or a Chod hook. This is important as the angle that the hooklink exits the inside of the eye is not so acute that it reduces the effective gape.

Tie the hook on using a simple Knotless Knot, with between 6 and 8 wraps neatly abutted and the hooklink exiting the inside of the hook eye.

Thread a large Covert Rig Ring onto the tag left from the knotless knot. You will attach your hookbait to this rig ring later.

Create a 'D' in the monofilament by passing it back through the eye of the hook and 'blobbing' the end with a lighter.

The hook and 'D' should look a little like this. A nice tidy 'D' that sits squarely on the back of the hook shank.

Create a Non Slip Loop Knot at the lead end of the hooklink. Trim off the tag 2-3mm from the knot and blob the tag that's left to secure.

The finished rig. If you use a slow (balanced) sinking hookbait the rig will always lay out nicely and reset if a fish samples it.

MULTI RIG

This amazingly versatile rig can be used with either pop-ups or balanced/ straight bottom baits. It also has the added advantage of allowing us to swap a blunted hook for a new one, without having to tie a completely new rig each time.

The rig mechanics are exceptionally good; broadly mimicking other 'D' rigs by keeping the hookbait tight to the back of the shank, whilst still allowing the hook to pivot and turn freely. The looped attachment of the hook adds a little rigidity, helping to keep the hook sat in an effective position relative to the hookbait, ready to take hold the moment a carp sucks in the bait.

Skinned hooklinks are perfect for tying this rig and, if you're fishing over a relatively scruffy lake bed, a soft hooklink like Ultra Skin can keep the hooklink lying flat. Whilst the addition of a couple of small pieces of Critical Mass Putty will help to pin the hooklink to the lake bed. Conversely, if the spot is clean and flat, a stiffer skinned material will help kick the hooklink out, without the risk of being held up by debris.

Understanding the nature of the lake bed will help you to decide how long the hooklink needs to be and which lead arrangement to use. A firm lake bed would suit a lead clip and a relatively short hooklink, but if the bottom is soft and silty you'll need to lengthen the rig so the hookbait isn't dragged down into the sediment. Alternatively, a 'helicopter' arrangement with the stop pushed up a few inches, will compensate for the lead sinking into the silt.

As with any rig, there are a few tweaks that make a big difference in terms of the rig's overall performance. For instance, the position that the counter balance Critical Mass Putty is in relation to the break in the skin or the addition of a small section of silicone tubing over the eye of the hook (which helps to keep the looped 'D' in position), are fine adjustments that can make a big difference to the end results.

Skinned hooklinks are perfect for tying Multi Rigs, we've chosen Sly Skin. Cut off 6 inches more than the finished hooklink.

Form a Fig.8 Loop Knot at both ends. Make sure the loop at one end is large enough to fit a hook through (length ways).

Make sure that the Loop Knots at both ends are fully bedded (tightened) down. Here we are using a Gardner Stripper tool.

Once the knots are securely bedded down, trim off the excess from each knot.

Strip a small portion of the skin away from the hooklink, just below the larger Loop Knot to allow movement of the hook.

Push the loop through the eye of the hook. We have used a size 6 Covert Chod hook, but Incizors work very well too.

Slip a large Covert Rig Ring onto the portion of hooklink loop you have already passed through the eye of the hook.

Secure the hook and rig ring in position by passing the loop over the hook as shown.

Mould on just enough Critical Mass Tungsten putty to make the hook and pop-up hookbait sink when testing it in the edge.

POP-UP HOOK ALIGNER RIG

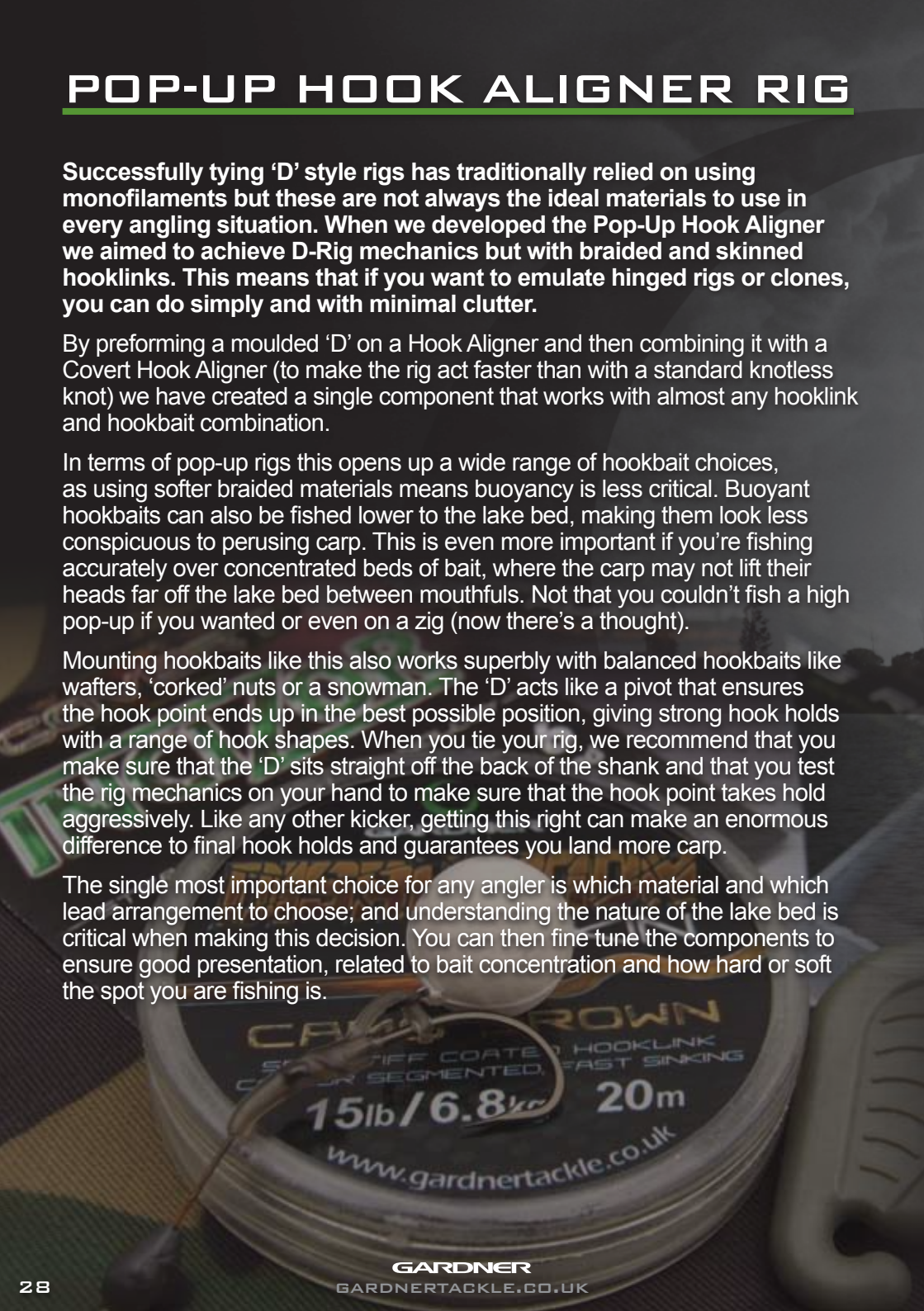
Successfully tying 'D' style rigs has traditionally relied on using monofilaments but these are not always the ideal materials to use in every angling situation. When we developed the Pop-Up Hook Aligner we aimed to achieve D-Rig mechanics but with braided and skinned hooklinks. This means that if you want to emulate hinged rigs or clones, you can do simply and with minimal clutter.

By preforming a moulded 'D' on a Hook Aligner and then combining it with a Covert Hook Aligner (to make the rig act faster than with a standard knotless knot) we have created a single component that works with almost any hooklink and hookbait combination.

In terms of pop-up rigs this opens up a wide range of hookbait choices, as using softer braided materials means buoyancy is less critical. Buoyant hookbaits can also be fished lower to the lake bed, making them look less conspicuous to perusing carp. This is even more important if you're fishing accurately over concentrated beds of bait, where the carp may not lift their heads far off the lake bed between mouthfuls. Not that you couldn't fish a high pop-up if you wanted or even on a zig (now there's a thought).

Mounting hookbaits like this also works superbly with balanced hookbaits like wafters, 'corked' nuts or a snowman. The 'D' acts like a pivot that ensures the hook point ends up in the best possible position, giving strong hook holds with a range of hook shapes. When you tie your rig, we recommend that you make sure that the 'D' sits straight off the back of the shank and that you test the rig mechanics on your hand to make sure that the hook point takes hold aggressively. Like any other kicker, getting this right can make an enormous difference to final hook holds and guarantees you land more carp.

The single most important choice for any angler is which material and which lead arrangement to choose; and understanding the nature of the lake bed is critical when making this decision. You can then fine tune the components to ensure good presentation, related to bait concentration and how hard or soft the spot you are fishing is.



A skinned hooklink is perfect for this rig. In this case we are using our colour sectioned Disruption hooklink.

Strip off sufficient skin from the hooklink to tie on the recommended Incizor hook with a Knotless Knot (no hair required).

The distance from the hook to the end of the skinned hooklink sets the height of the pop-up (these can also be used with 'balanced' hookbaits).

Mount a large Covert Rig Ring onto the preformed 'D' and use a Braided Hair Needle and thread onto the hooklink.

Carefully push the Pop-up Hook Aligner onto the hook so it looks like this with the 'D' sitting square on the back of the shank.

Tie on your chosen hookbait. We like to use dental floss to avoid piercing the hookbait.

Trim off the excess dental floss and make sure the rig ring is sitting neatly on the knot (a multiple turn Overhand Knot).

The finished rig.

HINGED STIFF LINK AND CHOD RIG

The advent of specialist high memory monofilaments like 'Trip Wire', revolutionised the use of hinged stiff rigs, and enabled us to set a curve in the hook section. This curve assures the hook section (or Chod Rig) will turn giving the best possible hook hold, regardless of the direction that the fish approaches the hookbait.

With the hookbait mounted on a 'D' tight to the back of the hook, the rig becomes extremely hard for fish to deal with because it acts as a pivot point that keeps the hook point facing towards the fish's bottom lip. In combination with the curved hook section and a free turning Mini Rig Swivel the result is phenomenal!

The 'classic' Chod Rig uses the same hook section as a Hinged Stiff Rig, which is mounted onto a small Flexi Ring Swivel that runs up and down an extended Helicopter Rig. It can then move freely up the line or leader to stop at a predetermined distance from the lead. With the leadcore, set the top bead in position with a section of 0.5mm Silicone Tubing and a Covert Safety Bead. With a Naked Chod (no leader) you can use a medium Target Line Stop to do this job. As the lead flies through the air, and then drops through the water, the rig stays up near the top bead and the hookbait settles gently down over any weed or debris, remaining clearly visible to any fish browsing in the area.

The distance between the lead and the top bead is critical. In light silt and low weed the stop can be set as little as 12 inches from the lead. But if the weed is several feet deep, the bead should be right at the top of a long Camflex or Plummet leader. The basic rule is simple, if in doubt fish the top bead further away from the lead.

To get the most out of the Chod Rig you'll need to be careful how you sink your line and set your bobbins. Always try to keep the line relatively slack, as any added tension may pull the hooklink down into the weed. Bite indication with a Chod Rig will often start out looking like a violent twitchy liner as the fish hooks itself against the anchor point of the lead. If the bobbin stays tight to the buzzer, there's generally a fish on the end.

How do you choose which rig to use? If you know the spots are clean, use a Hinged Stiff Rig; but if the lake bed is predominantly covered in weed, leaves or filamentous algae the Chod Rig will ensure better presentation and you can get your hookbait in position with fewer casts. This is especially important if you are casting at showing fish.

BOOM SECTION

For the neatest possible loops Gardner recommends anglers learn how to tie the 'Non Slip Loop Knot' (or use a fig. 8 Loop Knot).

Start with a simple Overhand Knot, thread on a Covert Mini Rig Swivel and pass the tag back through the overhand.

Wrap the tag round the hooklink several times and pass back through the Overhand Knot again (Blood Knot Style).

Tighten down the knot by only pulling on the tag (important) and trim off excess line from the knot.

Cover the knot with your nails and blob the tag material with a lighter.

The finished knot should look like this. Repeat this process at the other end of the boom section for added free movement.

HOOK SECTION

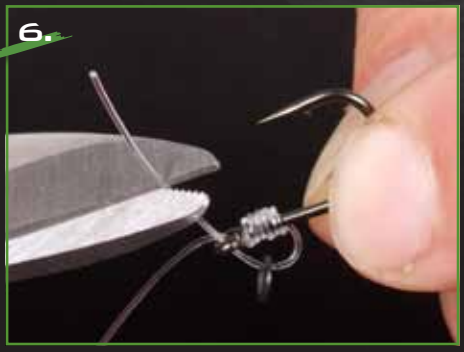
Pass a stiff hooklink material (we've used Trip Wire) through the eye from front to back and create a large loop, a few inches in diameter.

Keeping the beginning of the loop parallel to the shank, rotate the loop around the shank 6 to 7 times.

Carefully tighten the knot down. First on the hooklink side of the knot and then tease the wraps down.

Once you have pushed the knot into position, lubricate and then tighten fully.

Make sure the extra hooklink material sits parallel to the hook as shown. This ensures the rig will work as intended.



Thread on a rig ring and then create a 'D' by passing the hooklink back through the hook eye. Trim as required.

Make sure that the ‘D’ sits squarely on the back of the hook shank and then blob the tag end with a lighter to ensure that the ‘D’ is secured.

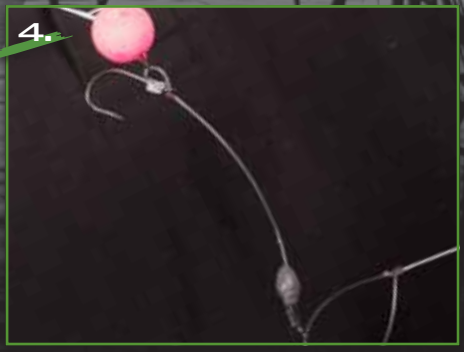
Cut off 4 to 5 inches of hooklink leaving ample material for attachment to the boom section.

FINAL ASSEMBLY

Time to put the two components, the hook and boom sections together, and finish off the rig.

Use a simple 3 turn Blood Knot (blobbed to secure) to attach the hook section to the Mini Rig Swivel on the end of the boom.

Once blobbed, push the blob flush to the knot and tighten the knot down fully.



Thread Critcal Mass Putty through the swivel eye and wrap around the swivel as shown.

ZIG RIG

Throughout the year carp spend a lot of time mid water away from the lake bed, swimming, sunbathing or sifting out suspended natural food. They'll actively feed on emerging insects such as Caddis and May Fly or feed on clouds of daphnia. These invertebrates make up a large proportion of the carp's natural diet.

On many heavily stocked waters, the fish will regularly feed on bait as it falls through the water column. This is largely down to competitive feeding but some fish will have learnt that baits eaten 'on the drop' rarely have a hook attached to them.

By watching for when the tell-tale bubbling associated with bottom feeding carp ceases or looking out for increased surface activity when it's warm, we can normally tell when the main feeding period on the lake bed has come to an end. This is the obvious time to switch your rods over to fishing with Zig Rigs.

Whether the Zig is fished so that the hookbait remains on or near the surface, or with a shorter link so that the bait is suspended nearer the bottom, the method can be tremendously successful at getting bites from fish that you simply would not catch if you had kept fishing conventionally.

On waters that respond well to floating baits, a change from conventional floater controller tactics to long tail Zigs, with the hookbait fished on the surface amongst freebies, can give you a massive edge as the fish are tricked by the change in presentation. If the fish in your venue react positively to the sound of a spod landing in the water, it can be worth making a sloppy/cloudy mix and spodding this over the Zigs. As the carp come into your area, excited by the sound of the spod landing and find a delicious cloud of food particles suspended in the water, they'll often take a mid water bait as soon as they see it! This method can lead to multiple catches and some fast and furious action.

Opinions vary, but we believe that on most occasions the hooklink and hook should be as small and light as possible bearing in mind the size of fish you're likely to encounter and the presence of weed or snags. Unless you're fishing a very well stocked venue where the fish compete (and won't be inspecting hookbaits) the fish are likely to be eyeball to eyeball with the hook and hookbait, so naturally keeping everything small and neat will be hugely advantageous.

In keeping with this scaling down of the tackle, small hookbaits are normally more effective too. Rather than using a 16mm pop-up, it's often more effective to use a tiny piece of Zig Rig foam, trimmed as small as you can whilst retaining enough buoyancy to lift the hook and hooklink. This foam is available in a wide range of colours, which is really useful as you will often find that a change of hookbait colour can lead to a quick bite.

It is important that the hookbait is mounted tight to the back of the hook shank on a short hair. That way you can be certain that when a fish mouths the bait, the hook will always be in the perfect position to take hold.

What you'll need...

Start by tying a 3mm loop and tying a size 12 Mugga hook on with a 6 turn whipping knot. It's important to keep the overall hair about 5mm

Cut off about a 1cm section of Zig Rig Foam. Cut a slice through the foam so that it's split from the centre and finishes just short of the end as shown.

Push a baiting needle though the foam so it comes through at an angle into the slice you have made. Pull the foam onto the hair with the hook pulled into the foam before the loop is out the other side.

Use a colour matched hair stop or dumbell stop to hold the foam in place.

The hookbait should look like this, with the hook partially hidden by the foam.

Trim off the edges as it makes the hookbait look less 'man made'.

With the hair at this angle the hook is more likely to stay wedged inside the zig foam during the cast.

TIPS AND TRICKS WITH PVA

PVA threads and tapes have been used by carp anglers since they were first introduced by Gardner many years ago. One of the first products were made by cutting and then twisting PVA film to form a user friendly string, perfect for stringers. These are a chain of boilies threaded onto a doubled over length of PVA and the loop formed is then attached onto the hook. When it dissolves it leaves a cluster of baits right next to the hookbait. The addition of a stringer also helps reduce tangles with any hooklink material. The stringer can be made up with halved baits. Halving baits will allow the looser textured inner surfaces to leach attractors much more efficiently than whole baits do.

A subtle variation on the standard stringer is putting the baits in a small Micromesh PVA Bag. As the PVA starts to dissolve it contracts and then explodes, spreading the freebies out slightly and making the finished trap look a little more natural. This spread is also positive in terms of the hooking situation, as the fish needs to move its head between baits and this is a much better scenario for hooking them.

With the introduction of solid style PVA Bags 'trap setting' reached new levels of efficiency. Solid bags, filled with a mixture of pellet, crushed boilie and attraction liquids and oils still account for a huge number of fish captures each year. A really short (soft) hooklink and a flat inline lead makes sure that even when the carp is hardly moving its head, whilst feeding on a tight patch of tiny baits, the hooklink can tighten enough for the hook to snare and take hold. There's loads of guidance on how to tie solid bags; you can find a guide on our website in the rig section under the title 'Bagging Rig'.

The introduction of PVA mesh systems like the Easi-Loada was undoubtedly a 'game changer'. It meant that almost any dry feed could be parcelled up and attached to the hook. They can be used with anything from a tiny bit of boilie dust to a whole 'donkey choker' of Halibut pellets (and everything in between).

Hint – Rather than hooking the PVA bag straight on, leave a 5cm tag above the Overhand Knot and attach the hook onto the PVA just above the knot. Wrap the tag around the hook securing the tag in place by hooking it again. By trapping the hookbait and hair in place like this, you stop the hair from twisting around the hook shank and you'll get a more consistent hookbait presentation (twisted hairs cause hook pulls).

Another alternative to the standard PVA bag is 'the stick'. These are a tube of compressed groundbait (made with powdered boilies, pellet, etc.) that's threaded onto the hooklink. Just like the solid bag, this method ensures great presentation, as the stick settles onto all sorts of lake beds leaving a hookbait amongst a visual and highly attractive strip of powders, leaching lots of attraction into the water. An under used method that is still as valid today as it was a decade ago.

PVA Dissolve Times

If you want your PVA to dissolve consistently you need to be aware of the factors that will influence its performance. The 2 that are most important are water temperature and 'food oil' contamination.

In winter even the finest denier PVA will take a lot longer time to dissolve, maybe too long. When the water temperatures are at rock bottom (around 5°C) it's worth checking your PVA in the edge to see that it is dissolving cleanly and in a timely manner.

Food oils are often included in bag and stick mixes and this oil coats the PVA film or fibres dramatically, slowing dissolve rates. It's better to make PVA bags and sticks up fresh as required as the longer the PVA is in contact with the oil the longer it will take to dissolve. The only time that allowing oil to impregnate the bags, which could be potentially useful, is when you're fishing really deep water and want to be certain that the PVA presentation makes it to the lake bed.

Hint – How to make PVA friendly particles. So you're fishing over a bed of particle/seed baits. Why not treat a bit of the mix so that you can use it in a PVA bag? It's easy! Simply drain off as much water as possible and then add a high level of salt into a small portion of the particle mixture. Keep draining off any excess water, add a little more salt if needed and this will inhibit the PVA from dissolving. At this point you can even add a little hemp oil.

Hitting the Mark

Accuracy is paramount in achieving consistent results when fishing 'out in the pond'. This is true whether you're visiting heavily featured lakes, weedy waters or just on venues where a bait feature creates concentrated or competitive feeding, promoting a positive angling situation.

The underlying point is this; on a day to day basis just being able to reposition hookbaits and apply freebies accurately will help you catch more carp and this is where 'wrapping up' and marking your line is worth practicing. The method is very simple:

When you first arrive in a swim, and you have identified a specific area that you wish to target (perhaps you have seen fish show near there) you cast a bare lead out to check for weed and features. By feeling the time it takes the lead to hit the lake bed, you can guestimate the depth. When it does touch down on the lake (or river) bed, does it land with a bump or softly? A hard landing would indicate a compact or firm substrate like gravel or sand. If it's soft then you're probably in silt. If it lands lightly and you reel in weed then the answer is obvious.

When you feel a drop that seems clean, put the line in the clip on the reel spool and cast to the same spot, to double check the range and the nature of the lake bed. After that, you can use wrapping sticks set 1 rod length apart (12ft normally) to measure the distance to the spot. Then duplicate that range onto a fishing rod.

Tie a marker using a Sliding Knot with soft elastic like 'Mark it' or paint on some Glo Pro and you have a semi permanent marker for when you want to clip up again.

It seems ridiculously simple and it is, but this process is so much easier and accurate when compared with the old fashioned marker float approach. Of course the marker float method still has its place when trying to identify relatively small changes in depth, as this is still the only way to precisely assess topography.

If you're fishing the same venue regularly it's worth building up a library of spots (recorded on a smart phone or in a note book) giving the exact distance from the front of the swim to specific spots related to sight markers on the far bank. This way you can minimise disturbance when arriving at the lake if you have found carp in a specific area. The last thing you want to do is thrash the swim!

Fish Welfare

So what exactly is a safe rig? To many anglers it is as simple as using a set up that enables the fish to rid itself of the lead. Unfortunately not enough anglers consider how important it is not to risk fish being left trailing terminal tackle should the main line be cut on an underwater obstruction, or the failure of a poorly tied knot!

With a little thought it's easy to achieve this level of safety, even when using leadcore leaders. By using a well constructed Helicopter Rig, you can ensure that the hooklink separates from the leader and avoids any chance of the fish being tethered on trailing tackle.

Fish welfare is much more than just considering rig safety though! What about fishing near to snags or in thick weed? It is important that the tackle we use is adequate for the size of fish and the obstacles we are likely to encounter along the way. It really is simple. If you do not land a fish because of weed or snags you need to reconsider whether the position of your hookbaits needs to be changed. You can then move them to a spot where you can successfully land the fish you hook. The strength of your tackle may also need upgrading, changing to stronger lines and hooklinks and heavier gauge hooks. In really severe conditions even these measures might not be enough, in which case there is only one choice... Stop!

It's our obligation as anglers to make sure that all the fish we catch are returned in pristine condition and we should also consider the welfare of the fish in a broader way. Details such as wetting slings and mats before laying the fish on them are very important, as this stops the protective mucous layer being removed. This mucus acts as a barrier protecting the fish from bacterial infections. Another consideration is the time the fish is out of the water; before you lift the fish out of the water make sure that everything you need is at hand. It makes a big difference.

Treat any sores or wounds with a tried and tested carp care product like Gardner's 'Medic Plus'. This will help reduce the chance of the fish being infected and promote rapid healing of any affected areas.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