

10 TIPS

FOR TACKLING TRICKY VENUES

Circuit-water veteran **LEWIS READ** reveals how to go about tackling tricky venues and wily carp.



Angler: Lewis Read

UK PB: 47lb 12oz

Sponsors: Gardner Tackle and Carp Company

Lewis has banked carp from a fine selection of the UK's big-fish circuit waters.

Lewis prepares to cast out his cleverly constructed PVA bag.

1/ BALANCE YOUR HOOK BAITS

Whatever hook bait you use there are loads of advantages in choosing one with some inherent buoyancy. The best-known reason for balancing your hook baits is that carp feed primarily by suction, with a cautious carp able to sift hemp from larger, weightier, particles. Scary stuff; no wonder some fish go long periods without being hooked.

Less recognised is the massive benefit of the hook being hidden by the bait, and by rolling baits with small cork-ball inserts, or by using snowman-style presentations, the bait will sit over the top of the hook. What better means of disguising the hook than by tucking it away under a bit of carp grub?

Another big advantage is that the hook and bait will settle in a more controlled way. Not only will semi-stiff hook links have a greater ability to kick the bait out but the hook will settle with the hook bait in a more controlled manner, with the hook underneath rather than to one side of the bait.

A balanced bait can help to conceal your hook from wary carp.



3/ VARY LINE TIGHTNESS

Slack lines are all the rage, but now and again there are circumstances where their use may be inappropriate. They can actually damage your chances, depending upon the topography in front of you. On Frimley Pit 3 the use of Gardner Mirage fluorocarbon really helped in tucking the line away and getting bites from these heavily pressured carp. The problem is that the weed is the filamentous variety that allows the line to fall into it. It's great for disguising the line, but what happens when you get a bite? That line has a tendency to take a long time to free itself from the weed, causing a delay before you get direct contact with the fish. A big, angry carp charging around without a direct line of pull will inevitably cause an occasional hook-pull. Sometimes the advantage of using a line like the Mirage is outweighed by problems. Luckily, in this situation the weed really helped disguise the copolymer line I have been testing (the new HydroTuff). When the weed dies back I will be back on the Mirage because it really does seem to create an improvement in the catch rate. Identify individual circumstances and use the line that is right for each one. Tight lines still have their place, and there is absolutely no doubt that a very tight line dramatically improves the efficiency of many rigs.



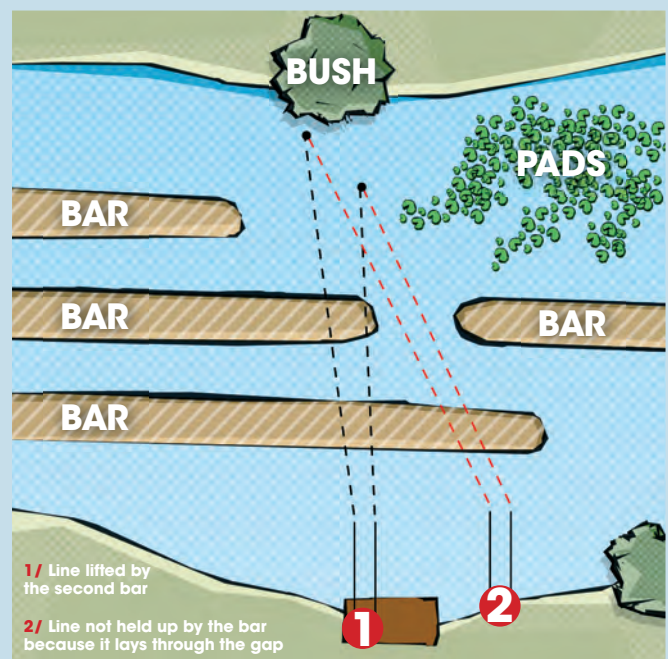
Use all available resources to find out about your chosen water.

4/ RESEARCH YOUR VENUE

You know your next venue in terms of the stock, but what do you know about past captures, successful baits, rigs and popular methods that have worked in the previous few seasons, and where fish have been caught at different times of the year and areas to pursue for certain target fish? Trawl the catch reports in weeklies, look at the venue detail in magazines like ACF, get on the Internet and use it for information from forums and fisheries websites. Don't forget to speak to the local tackle shops in the area. Every bit of knowledge you are able to scrape together before you get there may help you formulate an initial plan of attack, and give a long-term overview.

2/ CHANGE THE ANGLE OF ATTACK

Some features on pressured waters are often well known and, consequently, they are fished almost constantly. The fish know that there is regularly food there, but are ultra-cautious when feeding on these areas. We train them to be aware of fishing line coming to the feeding zone from a certain direction, so it's easy for them to check out the area for lines. Where rules allow, you can create radically different line angles by using a bait boat by running the bait out on a slack line in an arc, or even dropping a back lead off to one side of the feature and running the line into the area from a different angle, perhaps along a channel in weed or the bottom of a gully. Even the critical positioning of your rod in the swim can have a substantial effect. In Pole Position on the Pads Lake at Yateley I would set my rods up about eight feet to the right of the current swim position in the spring (before the reeds come up). This laid the lines perfectly through a gap in the last bar. I am sure this helped me nail Henry The Friendly Mirror Carp when I was privileged enough to catch a very rare brace of mirrors from the lake, when it still only held five originals.





Lewis charges his Glow Worm, ensuring he can find his spot in the dark.

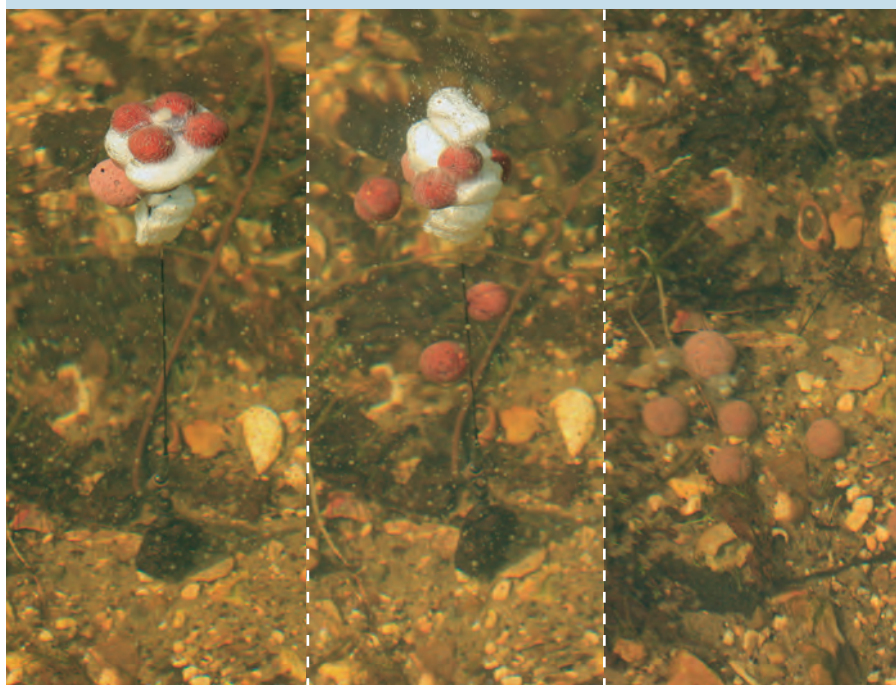
5/ MAKE SURE YOU CAN BAIT AND RECAST AT NIGHT

Use every means possible to make sure that if you get a bite in the night you can get that bait back out there as accurately as possible. Bait boats are great for this, but may not be allowed on your venue, so use sight markers on the far bank, Powergum or elastic markers on your line and the fluorescent tools like glow-in-the-dark markers or marker-float adaptors (Glow Worms). These enable you to reset the traps as effectively as you would in the daytime. Dawn is when the carp want to feed naturally for much of the year so it is imperative that you are angling effectively at this time.

6/ EXPLORE THE POTENTIAL OF PVA

Standard PVA bags or mesh systems like the Gardner Easi Loader are a much better tool for aiding presentation than is generally written about. Since June I have been fishing a venue that has become increasingly weedy and I have been experimenting with new bagging arrangements.

One that I particularly like is created by loading a dozen or so small Icelandic red boilies into a standard-width Micro-mesh bag but layering it with some Gardner dissolving rig foam. For a while, I have preferred to hook my mesh bags on by the tag above the knot, and then wrap the tag around the shank and nick it onto the hook point a second time to trap the hair and hook bait in place, just to avoid the hair spinning around the hook shank. Twisted hairs definitely cause some hook-pulls, and this is a fast and simple way to 100 per cent alleviate this happening. By masking the hook point with another dissolving nugget I can cast into small holes in the weed. As the bag dissolves the baits spread out more than would happen with a conventional arrangement – helping create a small but perfectly formed trap. Use PVA as a tool and experiment with its use and you will find that there is a much larger range of applications that far exceed the standard usage. Think outside the box, try the odd thing in the edge and get more out of the stuff.



Swapping tips with one of the Frimley bailiff team.

7/ GET ON WITH OTHER ANGLERS

It's hard enough to fish busy or hard waters – the last thing you need to do is make it harder on yourself by not getting on with the other anglers. Treat them how you would want them to treat you. If you set up near other anglers, check that you aren't going to affect them detrimentally. It's a lot to do with being reasonable. Work together to pool ideas, work out what the fish are doing through observation, keep in touch with what's happening down the pond when you aren't there, keep track of who's doing what (and where is being neglected). All these things are much harder with no support and no-one to go and have a chat with now and again. You never know – you might even find that you enjoy your fishing even more when there is a good friendly atmosphere. After all, when everyone is struggling because the fish simply aren't playing the game, there will always be a friend in the next swim who will be happy to make you a brew and whose biscuits you can eat!



Lewis clearly made the right bait choice on this occasion.

Carp show a preference for different baits during each season.



8/ TRY CLEVER BAITING PATTERNS

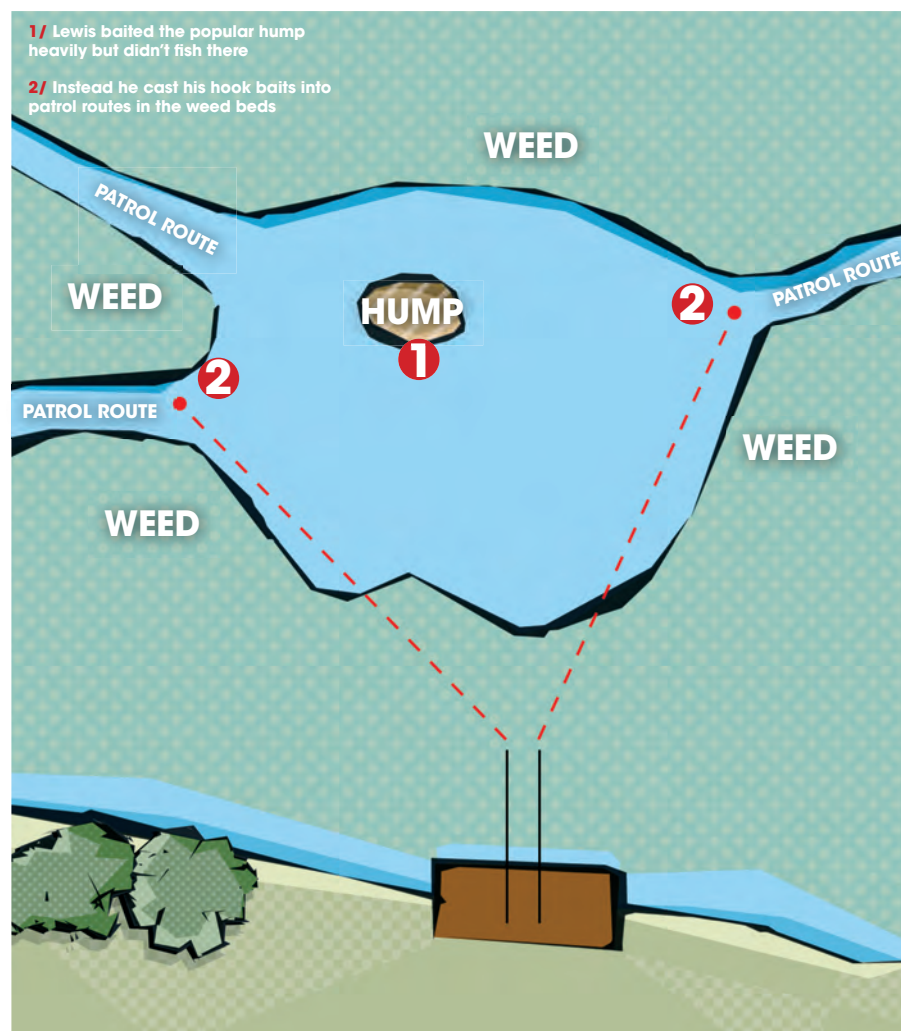
How many times have we seen advice about fishing hook baits just off the baited area? But how far can this principle be taken? If you understand the daily movements of the fish and want to set traps, you can also improve your chances by baiting up at other points along the patrol route that the fish use before they get anywhere near your area. When they get to you they will have invariably sampled a few baits on the way and may have that little extra confidence needed to make a mistake on your hook bait. Rather than baiting a single point on a margin, spread the bait along it to pick the fish up as they move. Alternatively, bait in several clusters with only one of them having your baited rig in. If you are fishing a known clearing in weed on a pressured venue, put most your freebies on the feature and fish small stringer traps well away in the channels that the carp use to travel in and out the clearing.

9/ BE AWARE OF BAIT CYCLES

One bait will sometimes dominate a venue for a period of time. Some people prefer to fish on, working their own chosen bait, knowing that long-term results will make the effort (and faith) worthwhile. Other anglers prefer to jump on the going bait. Neither is less valid than the other. After all, aren't we fishing to catch occasionally?

As you get to know the venue you may start to observe regular patterns evolving. For example, the vast majority of summer bites on the Car Park Lake came to the vegetables while I was angling there – normally tiger nuts fished over Partiblend and/or hemp. However, after September all the bites would come to the boilies again. Occasionally, the bait of choice would be pellets, or the fish would switch to a particular boilie. Nevertheless, this was the exception and took a substantial investment in time and extraordinary skill and judgement to get it exactly right.

For most of us it's hard to establish a boiled bait over that of other anglers because so many different ones go in. The best we can do is choose a quality bait that we have confidence in. Keep the bait going in, even when you are fishing alternatives, because come the autumnal feed-up you can really reap the rewards of your bait application.



Choose the most suitable lead arrangement for each situation.



10/ USE THE RIGHT LEAD ARRANGEMENT

I have long been a fan of the helicopter rig, with a long leadcore and a nice hinged stiff rig. However, now that I am lucky enough to work with a team of cracking sponsored anglers here at Gardner, and fish a wider variety of venues, I am aware that you need to be prepared to ring the changes in your set-up to get the best from your venue or swim. There is no point in using a 6ft leadcore leader when you're fishing halfway up a bar and the top three feet are acting like a warning beacon, pointing towards your hook bait suspended mid-water off the front of the bar. In this case it is far better to perhaps to use short piece of rig tubing. This will offer abrasion resistance near the lead and tangle-free casts without drawing attention to the hook bait like a length of leadcore or a spliced loop-style leader might.

Sometimes the fish will use a fixed lead to violently shake a hook point off. In this case a running lead may well be the best bet, if the weed isn't too bad, or a lead clip with the lead held in place by PVA for the cast.

The front slopes of bars and far margins are another great one for sliding flat inlines. You get the benefit of them sitting without rolling down the slope, but if a fish picks up your hook bait and dislodges the lead they simply can't deal with it!

Following his own tips, Lewis bagged this mint-conditioned common from a circuit water.

