

an
introduction
to

PVA

by
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If you look inside the tackle box of any carp angler in any country where carp fishing is popular, one item you will always find in one form or another will be P.V.A., or Poly Vinyl Alcohol, to give it its full name.

This remarkable product was first used in fishing by sea anglers who used PVA Tape to help tie up their rigs to prevent tangles on casting. Until then PVA had been widely used for medicinal purposes before its fishing applications opened up a whole new market for the manufacturers.

The beauty of PVA is its strength when dry and its ability to completely dissolve when immersed in water, without affecting or harming its immediate environment in any way (including the fish!).

In the early 1980's Gardner launched the first PVA product specifically for use in carp fishing. The original PVA String was made by a machine 'weaving' together several narrow strands of PVA tape. This makes the PVA easier to thread boilies onto and then attach to your rig. The original PVA String is strong enough to withstand even long distance casting thus enabling you to fish 'free' offerings, the same as your hookbait, at any range.



PVA Bags, as opposed to string, allow other baits to be used such as dry particles or groundbaits. The contents of your PVA Bag makes a great attractor for your hookbait to lie in once the PVA has melted. Taking this one stage further, it is also possible to encapsulate your entire rig inside the PVA Bag before casting. This clever idea has a number of advantages –

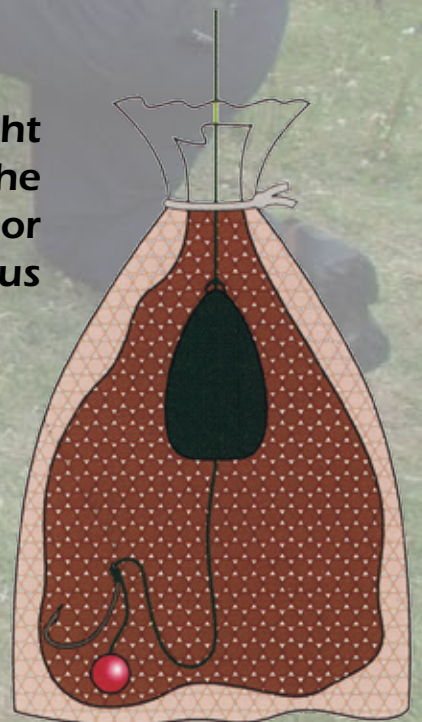
1) It is more aerodynamic than casting a PVA Bag hanging off a rig hook in the normal manner.



2) Presentation of your rig, even when fishing in weed or silt, is much improved due to the hook, hookbait and rig being 'protected' until the PVA has melted.

3) Your hookbait is always right in amongst the contents of the PVA Bag as opposed to 'nearby' or alongside, thus far less suspicious to the carp.

So now we have PVA Bags in all shapes and sizes:- Large, Small, Mini and Tubes (for longer distance casting) - and PVA String which also comes in various forms. There is Fishnet PVA Tape, which is a string but with a rough 'webbing' feel to help grip boilies and keep them in place on the string whilst casting. There are various diameters of string to suit varying water temperatures.



One of the most frequent questions we are always being asked is "how long does PVA take to dissolve in the water?" The simple and honest answer to that is "the warmer the water, the faster the melt, and vice-versa". This is why there are now various types of PVA for sale, to cater for all seasons and angling situations.

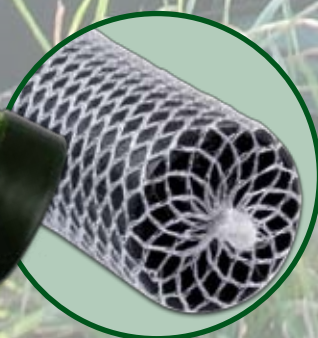
Another major step forward in PVA has been the introduction and development of Mesh or 'Stocking' type PVA. This allows water to pass through, within and around the PVA parcel and its contents, a lot easier which speeds up the meltdown considerably. It is also very strong when dry and lends itself to knotting far more readily than the solid bags.

Different gauges allow for different water conditions and different baits. A fine mesh allows the use of small pellets, narrow tubing to accommodate boilies in a tight group and now there are several PVA loading tools to help get the best out of this tricky material.

The 'Baggit' is a simple funnel designed for directing baits into PVA bags or mesh.



The 'Easi-Loada' is a plastic tube pre-loaded with the mesh PVA all ready to use.



As the name suggests, using the Easi-Loada couldn't be simpler...

It's just a case of pulling off enough mesh to tie an overhand knot with (see photo), and your 'free bait' can then be loaded into the other end of the tube, straight down into the knotted end.



A second knot is then tied above the bait giving you a neat little package which can be cut and trimmed down for use.



These handy tools are really useful for creating the best bait presentations quickly and easily – the top anglers totally rely on them, no less than me!



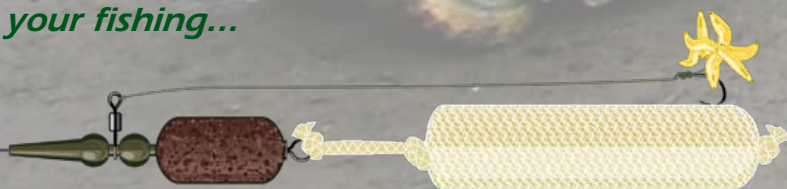
The most recent development in PVA Bag fishing – and a method that I think could really help your fishing - is the idea of loading small PVA mesh bags very tightly with crumb or groundbait mixes; then compressing the bait inside the bag with a dedicated plunger.



As the compressed mix begins to swell after casting, it finally bursts out of the bag and disperses further afield than a normal bag of free offerings. Also small particles are 'fired out' from the bag of compressed bait thus creating further attraction.



There are so many possible setups - experiment to find the best method for your fishing...



Again, is it good practice for the bait and rig to be fished 'inside' the PVA Bag and there are special 'Stick Mix' needles available to help you achieve this.

A few tips for getting the best results from your PVA...



1) **ALWAYS** store PVA products in a dry environment. It sounds crazy to remind people of this, but you will be surprised how easy water (and water vapour) can get around the place! Good quality PVA is not cheap to buy but very easy to waste...

2) Try storing your PVA in a bucket of dry pellet. Not only will that keep the PVA dry, but it will also take on a bit of the smell and oily texture of the pellet...lovely! Take care with oily pellet though as this can slow down the melt rate in cold conditions.

3) Non-water-based liquids, such as some amino attractors and flavours, can be added to PVA Bag contents to enhance attraction without melting the PVA.



4) Practice making PVA Bags tight and neat; they will fly more smoothly on the cast and sink more quickly – vital when you need the bait to hit the spot fast.

5) When using Solid PVA Bags, don't forget to make a few small puncture marks in them before casting to help them sink quickly. Bags with no holes will float and drift until they start to melt.



6) As you move towards the colder, winter period, scale down the size of the PVA Bags and decrease the number of free baits on your stringers. Carp are much less active in these conditions and will be put off feeding by larger quantities of bait.



7) When making stringers, space the boilies apart to allow water in between to aid fast melting and separation of free offerings.

8) Use the best quality PVA you can find. Inferior PVA does not dissolve quickly and will leave a nasty blob right where your hook is, and no fish likes the flavour of Poly Vinyl Alcohol, believe me! Residue from poor quality PVA not melting, or only partially melting, will prevent you getting bites...no one needs a day like that. It's worth hunting around for the finest, even if it costs more – better than blanking!



PVA is a top method that has revolutionised modern day carp fishing. There are many ways to use it, and you can experiment with what works for your fishing, but when you master the art, you won't look back. All of the UK and Europe's top specimen hunters are looking for the edge that PVA can give, and none of them leave home without it.