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# DROP ZONE

Do your rigs eject the lead unnecessarily and are your lead systems the right ones for the job? According to *Lewis Read* it's an often-overlooked problem.



# THE TACTICIAN LEWIS READ

**G**etting rid of the lead during a fight is often helpful. In some circumstances lead ejection is essential to increase the chance of landing a hooked carp. Whether it's because of heavy weed, fishing near snags or over particularly harsh topographical features such as steep-sided bars, losing the lead removes the risk of it acting as a point that can snag and cause excessive pressure on your hook-hold, thus enabling a hard-fighting fish to rid itself of the hook.

There are several means of losing the lead and by far the most popular, and arguably the easiest and most efficient, is the use of one of the wide varieties of lead clips that have been popularised over the last decade. Not only do these convenient systems allow the lead to pull free of the rig, but they also allow the quick and easy changing of weights to suit different methods.

Lead-clip systems are popular for fishing over light weed and soft lake beds because the lead doesn't drag the hook link down into the bottom in the same way that an inline lead would do. In fact, their capacity for



Large PVA bags and lead clips, not a good combo.



If using PVA bags with lead clips, PVA the lead in place for the cast.

fishing over a multitude of lake beds is second only to the helicopter rig.

In nearly all instances the discharge of the lead from the clip relies entirely upon the clip being firmly fixed onto the hook-link swivel, the length and finish of the lead clip's tail and the shape of the lead-retaining arm.

The retention of the swivel is controlled by several means, namely

internal retaining ridges, lock systems and plugs. Some are easy to use, while others can prove a bit fiddly. That said, most are effective as long as the correct size of swivel is utilised. On most occasions this is a size 8.

As I said, the length of the lead clip's tail controls the retention of the lead. Some are smooth, some ridged and some incorporate a raised bump on the shaft to increase the necessary force required to pull the lead off. The simplest way to make sure that the lead comes off is to reduce the distance that the tail rubber is pushed onto the clip. It may also be worth experimenting with different manufacturers' tail rubbers because they are not all the same; some are softer and others firmer – a fact that is overlooked by many customers.

You may find that you can incorporate a softer rubber onto your existing lead clip to improve its performance. You may find it necessary to chop back the lead clip when using a firmer rubber to make sure that the lead is ejected before the swivel is pulled from the clip. Alternatively, by using a softer rubber you can make sure that the lead clip



Even when I'm using a bait boat I make sure my lead set-up is spot on.

## TOP TIPS FOR LEAD CLIPS



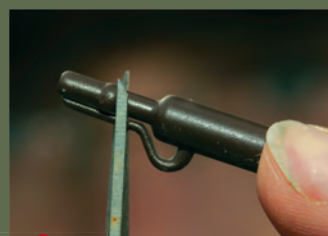
**STEP 1** Make sure that your swivel cannot pull free of the clip easily. It must stay in place.



**STEP 2** Experiment with different lead-clip/tail-rubber combinations.



**STEP 3** Replace any damaged tail rubbers because these will cause tangles.



**STEP 4** You can 'doctor' your clips, but don't trim them back too far.



works perfectly without needing to mutilate it.

Testing different combinations from trusted manufacturers is my out-and-out recommendation. For your own fishing you may find the matching versions do the job just fine. If you are not having any problems, such as the lead clip sliding away from the swivel, or the lead not releasing when necessary, then stick with your own tried-and-tested set-up. Bear in mind that you can learn a lot by mucking about with a few items from different manufacturers and getting a better understanding of how subtle changes to the set-ups can make a big difference to how your lead clip functions.

If you are using the lead clip with PVA bags, or have trimmed the clip right back, it may be necessary to tie a loop of PVA around the clip to make sure that the lead isn't ejected as your terminal tackle hits the water. I

recommend the use of braided PVA, such as Gardner's G-String, or a fishnet-type PVA rather than solid PVA tape. These dissolve quickly but tend to be much stronger and less stretchy, meaning it will take the strain of a cast much more effectively.

## THE ROTTEN-BOTTOM RIG



The effective function of a lead-clip system also relies upon all of us checking the condition of our lead clips and tail rubbers. If your lead clip

has been used for a while then it is worth making sure that it still grips the swivel firmly and that the tail rubbers are free from any tears or imperfections that may cause tangles.

Working at Gardner Tackle, I have been lucky enough to be involved in developing a lead-clip system that

both incorporates and improves some existing lead-clip design features, as well as being able to experiment with fine tuning other aspects to make them even better.

Which clip is best for you?



The set-up that I use for 90 per cent of my angling.



This has given me a good insight into lead-clip systems and, as good as they are, there are times when other lead systems are better.



Even light weed isn't cause to drop your lead.



# THE TACTICIAN LEWIS READ

For example, what do you do when you want to use a helicopter or zig rig but still want to drop the lead? Rotten-bottom rigs incorporate a lead attached to the terminal tackle by means of a section of light-breaking-strain line that acts as a weak link should the lead become snagged. The weak link is normally tied using 3lb or 4lb nylon. You will find that the link will only break when necessary and, more importantly, will give before your hook-hold on a big fish.

Despite requiring PVA to reinforce the weak link with substantial weight and long casts (see the step by step), this set-up will withstand gentle lobs with a small lead without any reinforcement, but take care!

The benefits in terms of your presentation over chod and when fishing in thick silt are enormous with helicopter rigs. Despite the extra effort required to PVA the lead, you will find that the benefit in terms of fish caught may well convert you.

The other clear benefit is that the rotten-bottom rig can allow you to land the 'less hard-fighting, non-carp species' (cough) without losing every single lead in your tackle bag.

I have always been a fan of helicopter rigs, so this method of lead attachment is my favourite because it means that I can continue to fish my favourite lead set-up but still eject the lead when needed. What's more, because a rotten-bottom rig only drops the lead when absolutely necessary, it's better for your wallet, the environment and still safe for our quarry.



*You don't always need to drop the lead to land a fish.*



*Your understanding of rig mechanics will improve massively if you experiment.*



*Action on a rotten-bottom presentation.*

Inline leads have clear benefits for fishing on hard bottoms when you want the lead to give the most proficient bolt-rig effect possible, which has proven useful when trying to catch pressured carp in some of the country's big-fish venues. Until recently the use of a drop-off, inline-lead set-up was an edge kept secret by some of the big-fish specialists. It allowed them to fish in a safer manner near snags and weed.

That has all changed and inline-lead arrangements where the end of the leader and the swivel are tucked into the nose of the lead has seen a great deal of publicity over the past few years. This method ensures that the instant a fish picks up your hook bait and tightens the line to your rod tip, the swivel is pulled out of the lead and is instantly discharged. This occurs whichever species picks up the rig. The lead can discharge when you are retrieving the terminal tackle through weed.

I can understand using this set-up in extreme circumstances, such as stalking in the edge near very thick weed and snags, but it is often

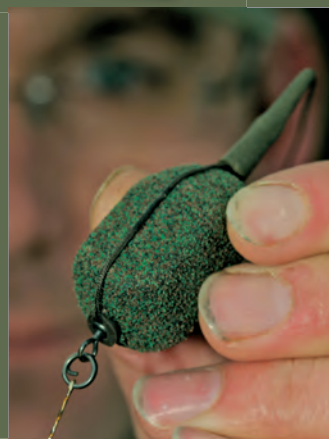
## THE DROP-OFF INLINE LEAD



**STEP 1** This is the only drop-off, inline-lead set-up I'd advocate using...



**STEP 2** ... as both the leader and hook link are attached to the same end of the swivel.



**STEP 3** This set-up will drop the lead on every take, which is unnecessary...



**STEP 4** ... as the leader and hook link are attached to opposite ends of the swivel.



promoted for use where the obstacles to landing a fish are minimal. Add to this that the set-up (unless used with a bait boat) cannot be cast without PVAing the whole thing together on every cast, then I have to admit that I am not a fan.

A subtly different arrangement that I prefer, and one that Gaz Fareham has explained how to set up on page 136, is to have the leader attached to the same end of the swivel as the hook link. By plugging the other end of the swivel into the lead, the end with no leader or hook link attached, it means that the lead arrangement can be cast without fear of the lead ejecting. More often than not the lead isn't discharged when a bream or a tench picks up the hook bait – and never on the retrieve.

Having used this set-up with inline leads with both soft and hard inserts, I would offer the advice that if I were casting leads over 2oz at medium to long range then I would err on the side of caution and use a stiffer insert because these retain the swivel more positively. However, if I thought that

*The fewer leads you lose, the less you have to take.*

it was essential to drop the lead due to weed, then I'd use softer inserts available from top lead manufacturers such as Atomic Tackle.

In conclusion, there are clearly occasions when having a big lead that discharges very quickly and cleanly on a take will be a bonus. However, in my experience, this is regularly recommended for situations when it really isn't necessary.

It's up to individual anglers to carefully consider when automatically

discharging a lead is absolutely necessary. Rather than taking writers' advice verbatim, it is much better to rationalise the benefits of any lead-eject system against factors such as angling efficiency, fish welfare, cost and, dare I even suggest it, reducing the weight of your tackle. There is another factor to consider and that is the long-term concerns that we have regarding lead in the environment.

Believe me when I say that I am no Swampy The Eco Warrior. In all honesty, when people get on their high horse about environmental concerns I tend to switch off. However, when you realise just how toxic lead is after long-term exposure, and the fact that the EU will certainly bring in a ban on its use within the next decade – this date was going to be sooner but for some reason they bottled it again – then you may consider it relevant.

In reality, coated leads probably reduce the leakage of any toxicity into the environment. After the positive manner in which 99.9 per cent of anglers reacted to the concerns about, and the subsequent banning of, lead shot, wouldn't it be nice for us to once again consider 'lead issues' in a pro-active manner.

Consider which type of set-up is best for your fishing situation on each session. Is it an inline for hard gravel and sand, helicopter rig, which is a great all-rounder, or lead clip for flexibility and use over light bottom debris? Then decide whether it is absolutely necessary to dump the lead on your venue in that swim. If not, then don't do it.

*A fish from open water where there was no need to drop the lead.*

*The right lead set-up will help you land more carp.*

