

# Method fishing for Tench and Bream

By Monty Oates

Fishing the 'Method' uses a completely different technique from traditional ledger methods. With this method the groundbait is applied externally to the feeder and a very short hook link is used so that the hook bait is very close to the ground bait. Often the bait is buried in the ball of groundbait so that when the fish attack the ball of bait the hookbait is exposed with the fish mistaking it for part of the loose feed in the groundbait.

Method feeders are heavier than normal feeders since the rig used is semi fixed allowing the fish to hook themselves. Combined with the weight of groundbait moulded on the feeder necessitates the use of heavier rods and lines than the ones normally associated with ordinary feeder fishing. Trying this method of fishing with a light feeder rod will lead to disaster!

The 'Method' was originally developed for bream fishing but nowadays it is almost exclusively used for carp fishing. It has evolved into 2 main branches:-

1. For specimen carp where coconut sized balls of feed are moulded onto large frame feeders and cast out with beefed up carp rods. The feed used is made up very stiff in order for it to remain on the lake bed for a long time.
2. Match fishing for smaller carp on overstocked commercial carp fisheries. Much smaller feeders and feeds that break down much faster have been developed for this variation of the 'Method'. A heavy feeder or Avon style rod is suitable for casting the bait out.

## ***Types of suitable method feeder***

The types of feeder shown are all in line feeders, i.e. the line passes through the body of the feeder via the tube fitted. This virtually eliminates any tangles on casting, particularly when using very short hook lengths.

### **Flat bed feeders.**

Flat bed feeders are the most used, in particular when burying the hookbait in the feed ball on the feeder. They are designed so that the feed containing the hookbait is always uppermost allowing the fish to find the hook bait very quickly.



**Fox flatbed method feeder Side view**



**Fox flatbed method feeder Top view**



## Coil feeders

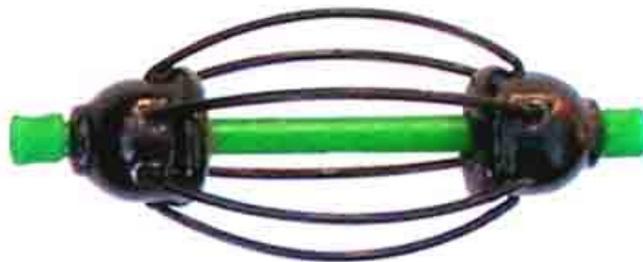
Quite old fashioned nowadays but cheaper than the flat bed feeders. Only practicable when not burying the bait in the ball of feed. Still use a very short hook link



Coil method feeders

## Frame feeders

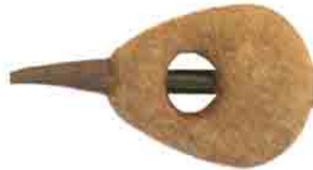
Frame feeders are still quite useful but not as versatile as the flatbed feeders. Generally lighter so useful to change to if the heavy splash of the other feeders are making the fish wary.



Middy method feeder

## In line lead feeders

A very useful feeder I found on Ebay. I use it quite a lot. Hooking fish is good due to the weight of the lead. You can vary the amount of feed around the weight and its blends in quite well with the lake bed when the feed goes.



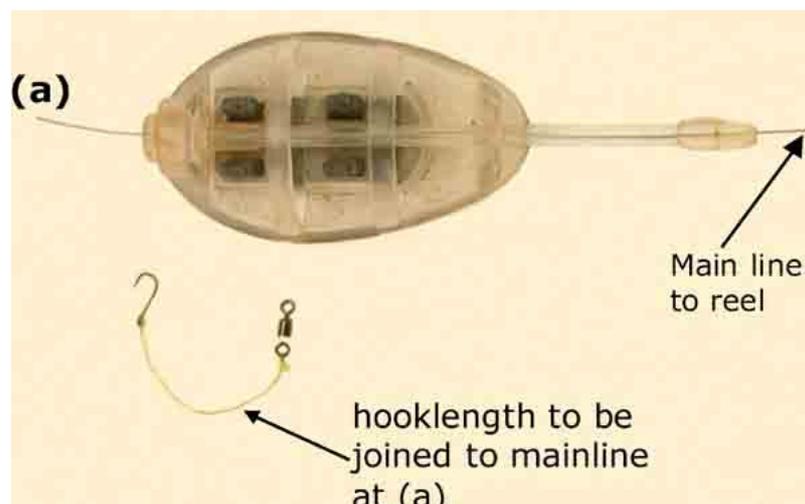
### 1.5oz lead method feeder

Available from FRANKSLEADS on Ebay  
Or contact directly  
Email [sales@franksleads.co.uk](mailto:sales@franksleads.co.uk)  
MOBILE: 07976 108749

## A basic method feeder rig

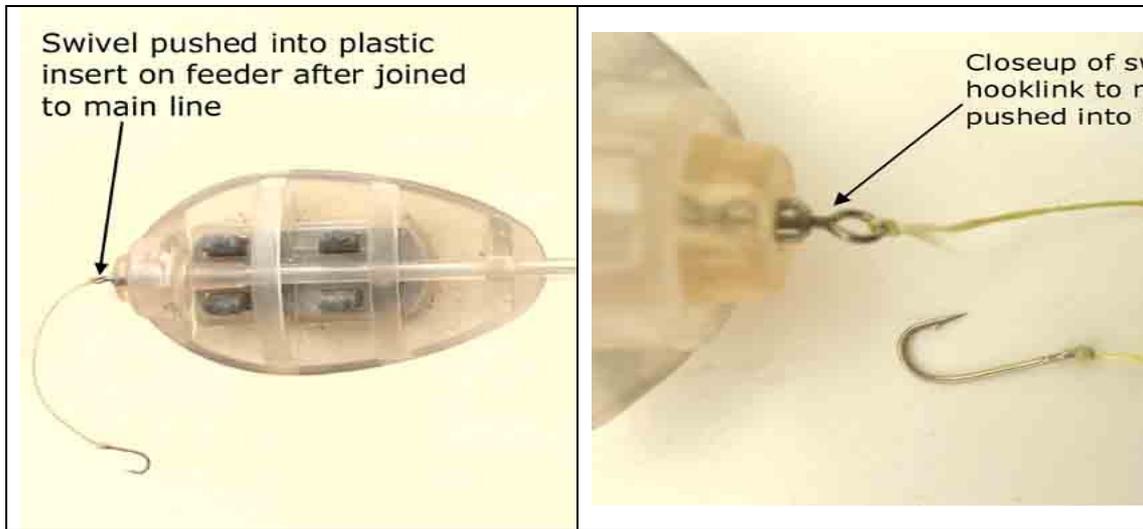
I use braid hook links almost exclusively for the method feeder. When burying the bait in the ball of feed you need the bait to remain in the feed and the supple nature of braid allows this. Monofilament hook lengths are much stiffer, particularly with the breaking strains used in this method of fishing, and the hook bait could spring away from the ball of feed as the feed breaks down.

1. Carefully thread the main line through the feeder until several inches protrude. If the feeder has been used before you may well find the tube of the feeder clogged with ground bait making threading the line through difficult. Arm yourself with a length of fine wire for unclogging. (copper wire from electrical flex is fine for this purpose )



2. Tie the main line to the swivel of the hooklink. The best knot to use for this is the 4-5 turn grinner knot. The traditional bloodworm knot is inadequate to the severity of the takes on this method of fishing. Insert

the swivel into the end of the feeder. Most modern method feeders have a soft plastic insert for this purpose. Earlier feeders (the coil feeder) do not have this and you will have to place a small piece of silicone tubing the end for the swivel to fit into.



The rig is now ready for use. This is a semi-fixed rig. If the feeder snags and the line breaks above the feeder the swivel will pull out allowing freeing the fish from the feeder.

Strong lines are essential with this type of fishing. For fishing at the Warren I use a main line of at least 8lb breaking strain and an avon type rod. hooklengths and knots

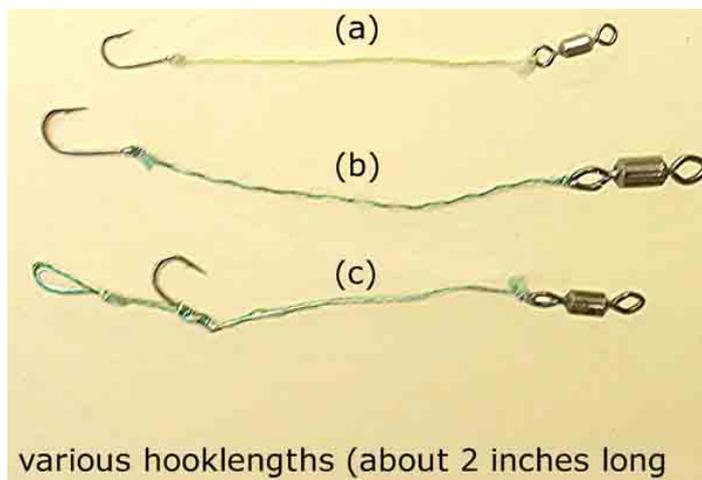


Fig.1 (a) A size 16 Kamasan B980 hook tied to approx. 2 inches of 10lb Fox megasilk Braid. Megasilk is particularly useful for tying small hooks. It is the thinnest of the hooklength braid and passes through the eye of the hook quite easily; it is available in 8lb breaking strain. The other end of the hooklength is tied to a swivel. It is important to make sure the swivel is of the right size to fit tightly into the method

feeder/ A size 10 swivel is suitable for most modern feeders.

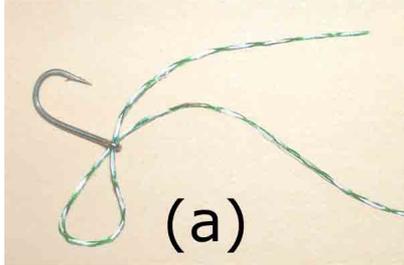
Fig.1 (b) A size 14 B981 tied with 10lb Fox delude braid.

Fig.1(c) A hair rigged size 14 B981 tied with 10lb Fox reflex braid

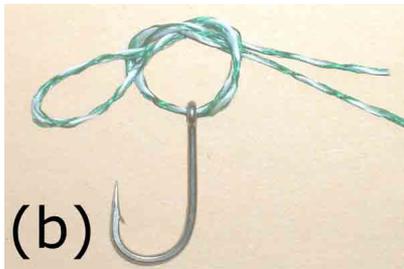
## **Knots**

The best knot to use for the hook and swivel is the PALOMAR knot - suitable for both braid and monofilament.

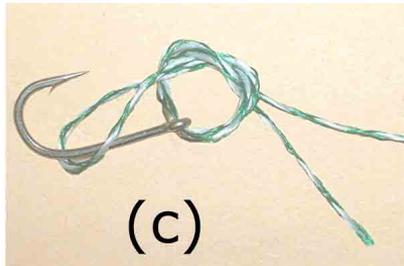
### **The Palomar knot**



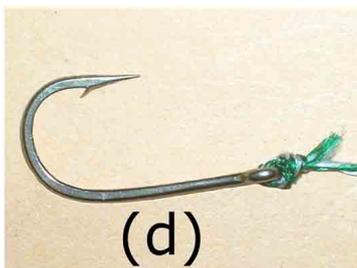
(a) Take a length of braid or monofilament, thread it through the eye of the hook and then back again to form a loop. With small hooks it is best to use Fox megasilk available in 8lb. breaking strain.



(b) Form an overhand knot with the loop and the 2 loose ends of the line.

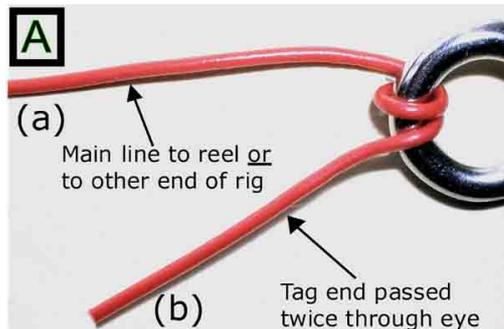


(c) Pass the hook through the loop end of the overhand knot.

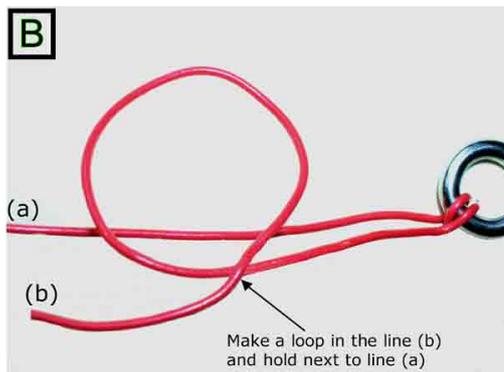


(d) Carefully pull the loose ends to tighten to loop (with monofilament use plenty of spit as a lubricant). The idea is to keep pulling until the loop slides up to the hook. There is a danger (particularly with braid) of the knot tightening up before the loop pulls up to the hook so make sure the loop slides over the eye of the hook before pulling the knot tight, pull tight and closely trim the tag to finish the knot.

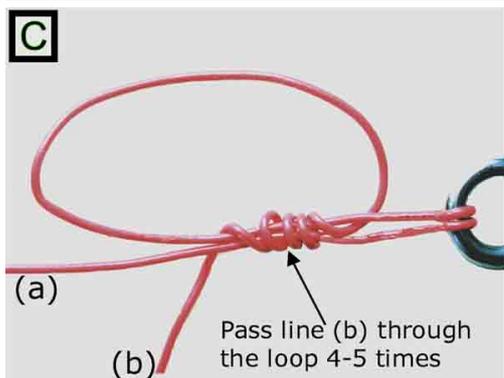
## The Grinner Knot



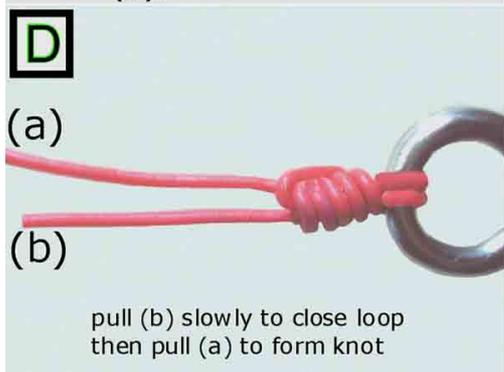
A. Take the tag end of the line (marked (b) in the diagram) and pass it twice through the eye of the hook or swivel. If you have difficulty doing this with small hooks it can be passed through only once but you will lose about 25% of the knot strength.



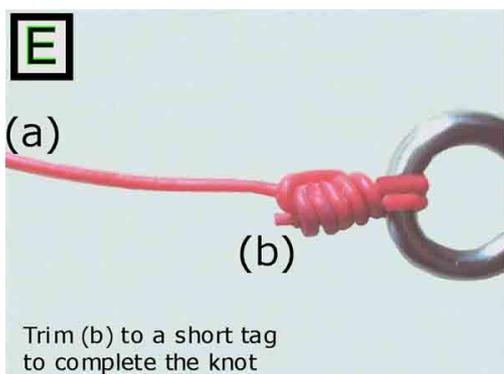
B. Make a loop with tag end (b) and hold next to line (a).



C. Pass the tag end (b) through the loop 4-5 times. Very carefully pull tag end (b). This closes the loop. Make sure the turns are lined up neatly.



D. Using plenty of spit, pull line (a) so that the knot slides up to the swivel or hook eye. Pull tight.



E. Trim off the tag (b) to finish the knot.



Finished knot using monofilament

### Hair rigs using braid



With this type of fishing involving frequent casting and changing of bait, the knotless knot and the hair loop can become very ragged. To prevent this from happening put a piece of shrink tube over the knot and shrink on

tight by using boiling water or steam. Place a drop or two of super glue on the hair loop, enough to soak through the loop. When dry this will prevent fibres from separating when using a hair needle.

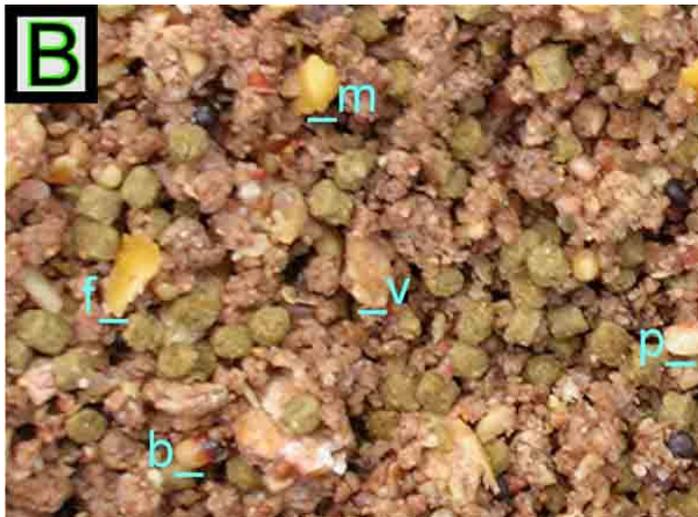
The commercially bought boilie stops can be unsuitable when using soft baits such as soft pellet. They can cut into the soft bait causing it to come off the hair. Try using a piece of spaghetti instead of a hair stop, you can break it so that the spaghetti is the same length as the pellet and will soften rapidly in water so that it doesn't cut into the bait.

## Groundbaits



I don't use the method feeder over the Warren until the water has significantly warmed up. This is usually towards the end of May. The groundbait used at this time should contain lots of particles to keep the fish interested. Photo A shows a method mix groundbait I use myself. The mix contains 60-70% particles I've added myself with the groundbait binding the particles so that the ball of bait can be delivered to the bed of the lake in one lump. Photo B

shows a close-up of the same mix. You can see the soft micropellets in the mix.

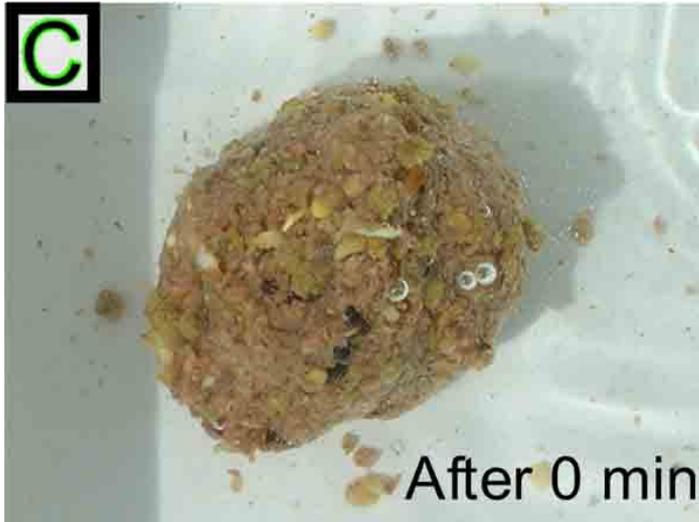


The trick to this groundbait is getting it to breakdown in about 5 minutes to form a nice pile of feed on the lake bed.

Many commercially bought groundbaits have far too many binders in them and when mixed with water have the consistency of concrete and will stay on the feeder for ages. You need to premix a tiny amount, squeeze tightly into a small ball and drop the ball into a container of

water. If the ball is still there after 5 minutes the feed is too binding. Add some brown crumb to the dry feed, mix thoroughly and repeat testing. Keep testing until the desired result is achieved. If the ball breaks up on hitting the surface of the water when dropped and a cloud is formed there is not enough binders in the mixture. Good binding agents are white crumb and semolina powder. Semolina is particularly effective and should be used sparingly. I make up my own dry method feed mixes and use both white crumb and semolina in the mix. The desired effect is shown in the pictures below.

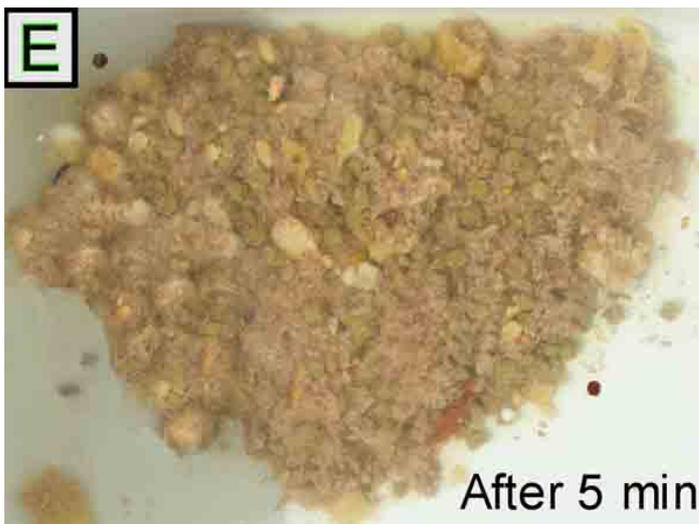
In the picture above, m=minced maize, f=flaked maize, v=vitalin, p=pinhead oatmeal and b=birdseed



C. The tightly squeezed ball of feed is dropped into a container of water. There is little break-up apart from a few bits of loose feed that were on the surface of the ball. A few air bubbles trapped in the feed are breaking free, helping to break up the ball of feed.



D. After 2 minutes the ball has almost broken (there are still some small lumps there) and has spread over the floor of the container.



E. After 5 minutes the whole ball of bait has virtually broken up and has finished spreading.

Make your groundbait up the night before you go fishing (or earlier and freeze it), this enables the dry mix to thoroughly absorb the water added and become inert. If the mix is still absorbing water when you start to use it the consistency may change and the ball of bait may fizz and bubble on the lake bed causing a cloud effect and attracting unwanted small fish.

Prepare your own particles in advance of adding to the base mix. Because commercial method mixes are sold dry any particle bait in them will be dry and rock hard. Also the amounts of solids in shop bought mixes are totally inadequate. You are better off buying a general fishmeal groundbait such as Swimstim green or marine halibut and tailoring your own. At least your mix will be unique and the fish will be less wary of it.

### ***The preparation of particles for the method mix***

1. Flaked maize and Vitalin. Add enough water to the maize or vitalin to cover and leave for about 20-30 minutes, drain and it's ready to add. The particles can be frozen until needed.
2. Birdseed (Marriages sell an aniseed flavoured condition seed at £13.60 for 25Kg or 2.19 for 3Kg). Take the amount required and just cover in boiling water. If the water is absorbed cover the seed again with more boiling water. Repeat until the seed remains covered with water. At this stage you can add the seed to the method mix or freeze for later, however, if you leave this to ferment it becomes extremely potent. Try leaving this for at least a week before adding to the method mix. A friend of mine who uses this mixture with great success over another club lake reckons it only just starts to mature after leaving for a month and reaches full potency after 3 months (at this stage it becomes a bit too smelly to handle). Pigeon mix is an excellent alternative to birdseed and you should be able to buy this more cheaply at a decent petshop. The method of preparation is the same as the birdseed.
3. Pinhead Oatmeal. Again available from Marriages. Add water to cover, leave for 30 minutes, drain, add to method mix or freeze. The particles swell to give large soft attractive white particles.
4. Hemp. This preparation is for hemp to be used as a particle for big fish, it differs in the preparation of hemp when fishing for roach. Take the required quantity of hemp and soak in plenty of water for 24 hours. Simmer the mixture for 20-30 minutes and allow to cool. Leave to stand in a covered container until a scum starts to develop on the surface of the water. At this stage the hemp is starting to ferment and is becoming very smelly and highly attractive to bream and tench. This process usually takes 3-4 days. Drain off, add to method mix or freeze for later.
5. Maize. Maize is an excellent bait to use as a hair rigged hookbait or in minced form as an additive to groundbaits. It is also very cheap to buy (Marriages sell a 25Kg bag for £6.35). Read most articles on preparing maize and they will tell you that it is impossible to soften maize by boiling, however, there is another way of preparing maize if you are prepared to take the time which leaves the maize grains much softer and suitable for mincing.
6. Take your maize and soak in plenty of water for up to 2 days. The grains will swell up to several times their original size as they absorb water but will still be extremely hard.
7. Simmer the maize for about 2 hours, at this stage you can add any flavourings you might want to use (I sometimes add some molasses at this stage) leave to stand for a couple of days (or longer if you want a smellier bait). Drain off the liquid put the maize in plastic bags and freeze

FOR AT LEAST 2 DAYS. The water absorbed by the carbohydrate cells in the maize grains will turn to tiny ice crystals. Ice crystals expand when formed forming a larger volume than the original crystals. This will disrupt all the cells in the maize grains and on thawing you will find that the maize minces beautifully if put through an old fashioned mincer forming a highly attractive pile of tiny soft maize particles. If you like, sort out some of the better grains for hair rigging before mincing.

Other additives that can be used for your method mix include molasses (useful as a binder, makes the mix stickier) and corn steep liquor. These preparations may seem long winded but are given in detail to produce the optimum results. With the hemp and birdseed perfectly acceptable results will be obtained by cutting out the time for fermenting.

What it boils down to is you can use any combination of particles you like and in any quantity, wheat, groats, pearl barley, lentils, dead maggots, casters etc. Just remember to give the particles a good soaking prior to adding to the base mix. I like a mixture containing a lot of small particles to make the fish stay and root around once they arrive.

Take your base mix, it could be a fishmeal groundbait or a commercial method mix add water a bit at a time, mixing thoroughly until it is quite damp/ Leave to stand for at least half an hour for the water to be fully absorbed. Add more water at this stage if necessary. Add your prepared particles and mix thoroughly. At this stage you should be able to squeeze into a firm ball but the ball will break up quite easily (try breaking it in half). Test a small ball in water and it should break down completely in around 5 minutes. Adjust if necessary.