

USING PELLETS

By Monty Oates

Pellets for hookbait

Without a doubt the most consistent bait for large catches of Bream and Tench (and other species) over the last year has been the soft pellet. This is almost entirely due to the clubs' positive policy of regular feeding of pellet throughout the year. Over the last year about 4 tons of pellet has been regularly fed throughout every lake in the complex and the fish are now regarding this as part of their regular diet. A few notable catches using soft pellet are shown below.

| Who | What | Weight | Where | Time | Bait | Method |
|---------------|--------------|---------------|--------------|--------------|-------------|---------------|
| Gary Shaves | Tench | 12lb 2oz | Main lake | Early Spring | soft pellet | POLE |
| John Musson | Crucian Carp | 3lb 12oz | Square lake | Spring | soft pellet | FEEDER |
| Monty Oates | Crucian Carp | 3lb 4oz | Main lake | May | soft pellet | FEEDER |
| Mickey Noakes | 19 Tench | | Match lake | May | soft pellet | POLE |
| John Musson | 17 Tench | | Match lake | June | soft pellet | POLE |
| Paul Hope | 29 Tench | | Match lake | June | soft pellet | POLE |
| Monty Oates | 14 Tench | | Match lake | July | soft pellet | FEEDER |
| Day ticket | 15 Tench | | Match lake | August | soft pellet | WAGGLER |
| Monty Oates | 150lb+ Bream | | Main lake | September | soft pellet | FEEDER |

Most soft pellets sold in tackle shops are expensive and designed almost exclusively for pole fishing. Anglers using rod and line or feeders have difficulty retaining these pellets on the cast. A much better and cheaper way is to prepare your own pellets where you can control the consistency so they are suitable for waggler and feeder fishing.

This can be achieved by using EXPANDER PELLETS. Normally, one £2.50 bag of expander pellets used exclusively as hook bait lasts me a whole season. I have found that the best results are obtained with TON UP expander pellets and RINGERS expander pellets.

Preparation 1

IGNORE THE INSTRUCTIONS ON THE PACKET, it's for pole fishing.

6mm pellets

Take enough pellets for hookbait for a days fishing, soak in plenty of water for 20 minutes, drain and leave for 20 minutes. Place in a plastic bag, Shake gently to separate, leave in fridge overnight to soften right through. Keep in plastic bag while fishing, only take out enough for about an hours fishing at a time since they rapidly dry out. Unused pellets will keep in a fridge for about 1-2 weeks.

4mm pellets

Same for 6mm except only soak for 10 minutes.

Preparation 2 (Jelly pellets)

6mm pellets

Take enough pellets for hookbait for a days fishing. Take a cup of boiling water, add half teaspoon of gelatine and stir vigorously until gelatine dissolves. Pour onto pellets and leave for no more than 3 MINUTES. Drain, leave for 20 minutes,

Place in plastic bag, shake gently to separate, store in fridge for 48 HOURS (to set the gelatine)

4mm pellets

Same for 6mm except soak in gelatine for maximum of 1½ minutes.

This results in lovely rubbery firm pellets that will stay on the hook for ages and soften in the water. Again only take a few out at a time to prevent drying out when fishing.

(a) Granulated gelatine can be easily purchased from the baking section of any supermarket. A whole packet should last you over a season.

(b) Big advantage of pellets prepared by both methods is that they float. Shop bought ones sink. Using number 12 hooks for the 6mm and a number 14 hook for the 4mm pellets will cause them to just sink. This gives very slow sinking bait when used with a waggler or feeder and will cause the bait to flutter about enticingly when fish are rooting about. The disadvantage is they cannot be used as loose feed since they float.

(c) Always hook these pellets sideways on when using a waggler or feeder. Break open one of the soft pellets and you will see there is a grain running through the pellet. By hooking them sideways you are hooking them against the grain so they will resist flying off with vigorous casting.

Loose feed pellets

When float fishing any 4 or 6mm sinking pellet can be used as loose feed. I soak mine for about 10 minutes the night before and leave in a plastic bag overnight in the fridge. This softens them and they sink more slowly when thrown or catapulted in. They also behave similarly to the hookbait on the lake bed. Unused pellets will keep for a week or so in the fridge.

Groundbait

On many occasions, large quantities of groundbait can mean the kiss of death at the warren, particularly in the match lake where the water is clear and the better fish will steer clear. In the summer you will almost certainly be 'bitted out' by tiny fish with the excessive use of groundbait.

The following gives 2 recipes for pellet based groundbait that I use with a fair degree of success in the Warren. They have the added advantage that they are prepared beforehand and frozen if necessary, giving you more fishing time on the bank.

(a) Take 1 pint of micropellets (2-3mm) soak in plenty of water for no more than 5 minutes, leave to soften overnight (preferably in fridge) . Take ½ pint of fine fishmeal-based groundbait (swimstim or marine halibut are good) and add water sparingly, mixing until groundbait is damp and just holds together. Thoroughly mix together with the softened micropellets. Add a small handful of 3mm green swimstim pellets and a small handful of 3mm marine halibut pellets. Mix thoroughly. This can be frozen if prepared in advance .

The groundbait provides just enough adhesion to hold the pellets in a feeder while casting. The groundbait will form a cloud in the water and the pellets will form a bed of feed on the lake in which the Tench and Bream will root around for

ages. When used with jelly pellets on the hook it is not unusual during frenzied feeding periods to find the fish taking the hookbait on the drop. The inclusion of the hard pellets with the soft gives a lengthy breakdown rate of the mix, allowing the bed of feed to remain active for a considerable period of time. Bites on the feeder can take the rod from its rest!

(b) Take 1 pint of 4mm slow sinking pellets, soak in water for 10 minutes, drain and leave to soften overnight (preferably in fridge). Take a small quantity of vegetable oil (about 50ml) - you can use fish oil but it is very expensive. A compromise is to add a small quantity of fish oil to the vegetable oil to give a bit of flavour. Add to the softened pellets, mix thoroughly and leave overnight for the oil to be absorbed. Bait is now ready and can be frozen prior to use.

The property of this mix is that you can gently squeeze the pellets into a ball or put in a feeder without the pellets clogging together in one lump. As soon as the pellets are immersed they separate into individual pellets and form a bed on the lake. A groundbaitless feed for feeders. I often alternate between the 2 mixes when feeder fishing.