

both relate to how I will fish with the different baits.

First of all, hemp; I know that to catch on this bait my presentation is likely to be just touching, or just off bottom. Therefore it will be important to achieve perfect presentation. The further out you go with the pole, the more difficult presentation becomes. This ties in perfectly with casters and chopped worms, because my rigs are likely to be heavier and I can be confident of my presentation with up to 30 centimetres of line laid on the bottom if necessary.

The other thing to consider when choosing your swims is how you intend to feed them. I know my hemp line will be purely relying on constant loose feed, whereas my caster line will be fed via either a big pot or a small Cad Pot on the end of the pole. It is certainly easier to keep your loose feed accurate at 13 metres rather than 16; another factor that results in hemp at 13 metres and chopped worm and caster at 16.

The logic I have applied to deciding which bait goes where can be applied to any canal, or any form of fishing for that matter. Think carefully about how you intend to present and feed your bait, then apply that to your swim on any given day.

Now that I know which baits I intend to fish and where, the next decision is rigs. Hemp fishing for me is all about finesse. I don't want an overly heavy

How To Hook Hemp



Pass the hook point through the pre-pierced grain...



... thread the grain on to the hook and out of the split...



... and the result is a perfectly hooked roach.

float affecting my bites or presentation so in the 2.5m depth I have on this line I have set up both 0.3g and

0.5g PB Inter 1 floats.

The lighter of the two incorporates a series of No12 shot strung out at 12cm intervals. This rig is designed to give a steady fall of the bait and minimal resistance to any big roach that should think about having a chew. The heavier rig is in case the fishing is excellent (which it can be on the Stainy!) and I want to get the bait down to the killing zone quickly, so a bulk 50 centimetres from the hook and two No10 droppers give me a chance of catching quickly when the fish arrive.

I am aware of various ways of hooking hemp, but for me there is only one. I cook a small amount in a pan, keeping an eye on it until it just splits. I then take it out and leave it to cool. Once cooled I take a Korum bait spike and pierce the indent of the kernel on around 100 pieces. Then once on the bank I can quickly hook the hemp by simply passing the point through the preformed hole and out of the split. I know this way my bait will not come off and sometimes I can catch two or three fish on one piece.

When hooking hemp like this I personally prefer a light, silver hook such as a 18 PR 322. This may seem like quite a big hook but you need plenty of point exposed to ensure a good hook-hold. I also prefer silver because it resembles the white inners of the hemp seed and my thoughts are that when falling it quickly catches the eye of the roach.

Elastics on these rigs have to suit your particular venue, but with over two metres of water I use a No5 Original Slip on the lighter rig and No6 Original Slip on the 'bagging' rig.

For feed I simply use

Sonubaits tinned hemp. This has been cooked in the can so is full of hemp oil, which definitely attracts fish into the peg. Two tins are enough for one match and today my feeding is quite simple. I will feed one tin at the start via a big pot. This will create a bed over which the fish can sit, then constantly loose feeding over the top.

The amount you feed all depends on how many bites you get, but before I go on it I feed around 10 grains every two minutes to build confidence.

The chopped-worm-and-caster rigs use the same principle as the hemp rig, whereby light 0.4g and heavy 1.0g floats are set up, but being further away I need a slightly thicker bristle and a rounded body shape helps to hold still during any tow, therefore I opt for the PB Inter 2. These rigs are shotted in the same way as the hemp rigs, with the lighter being strung out and the heavy rig incorporating a bulk and two droppers. My hook choice on these rigs is the ever-reliable PR 333 in a size 18 and 16.

All four rigs are on 0.10mm Reflo Power main line with 0.08mm hooklength. This is more than strong enough to land any bonus bream or perch, but retains a balanced setup for hopefully those better stamp roach.

With rigs prepared it is time to kick off the session. A pot of hemp at 13 metres, and one pot of finely minced worms and casters goes out on to the 16m line. Many people will be thinking that this is a lot of bait, but let me assure you, there are a lot of fish in this canal!

This is the time of a match where I would normally have up to two hours of fishing short for all sizes of roach on bloodworm. Today, because it is a practice, I'm going straight out to 16 metres to see what happens.

With no tow on the water I am happy to begin on the

0.4g rig; I want bites to start with so a single red maggot seems like a good starting point. Three small skimmers make me realise the initial cup of bait will not last long.

A medium-size Uni Cad pot adapted to carry Joe Carass' clever cat's-cradle elastic across the top is fitted to my pole to try and introduce casters regularly to the peg. A couple more small skimmers come before bites dry up. Whenever this happens the last thing to do is panic and pile in loads of bait, the likelihood is that a better fish has moved into the peg and pushed the smaller fish out.

A change to a single caster brought the desired response, with a perch around 12oz. Usually catching the culprit like this allows the smaller fish back in but a quiet 30 minutes makes me top the peg up with a small amount of worms and casters and have a look on hemp. Over an hour has passed now, and although hemp is known for being a bait that comes into its own late on in a match, I am interested to see if they are 'on it' this early.

A fruitless 10 minutes is to be expected, but then out of the blue I have an indication and hemp roach number one finds its way to the net. No more are forthcoming, though, so it is back on to the caster line.

It's worth noting that at this point I would still prefer to be catching small fish on bloodworm, but even after a relatively slow start I have got over 2lb in the net.

A few more small skimmers on the caster, before a change to worms sees two better skimmers grace the net. It seems like regular feeding with the Uni Cad pot is starting to have the desired response. This makes things interesting, because if I was not fishing this line it would be difficult to build the fishes' confidence without regular feeding, and although loose

A net of canal fish that's all about quality.



As we take the fish out for a catch shot I wasn't expecting a particularly big weight, but there's more than 14lb to show for the day's efforts.

The main thing to come from the session is that although bags of small fish can be a banker for team points, always try for those better-stamp fish that could add that extra weight needed to be a match winner when the scales arrive. ■

Win!

Each month the reader whose question is answered will receive a selection of the fantastic gear used by Lee on the day. This month Clive Baker will be winning:

- PB Inter Series 1 floats: 0.2g, 0.3g, 0.4g
- PB Inter Series 2 floats: 0.4g, 0.6g
- Reflo Power: 0.08mm, 0.10mm
- Original Slip elastic: No5, No6
- PR 322 hooks: 18, 20
- PR 333 hooks: 16, 18
- Uni-Cad pots
- Pro flat pole roller

feeding at 16 metres can work, it can be difficult to keep the fish contained at that range.

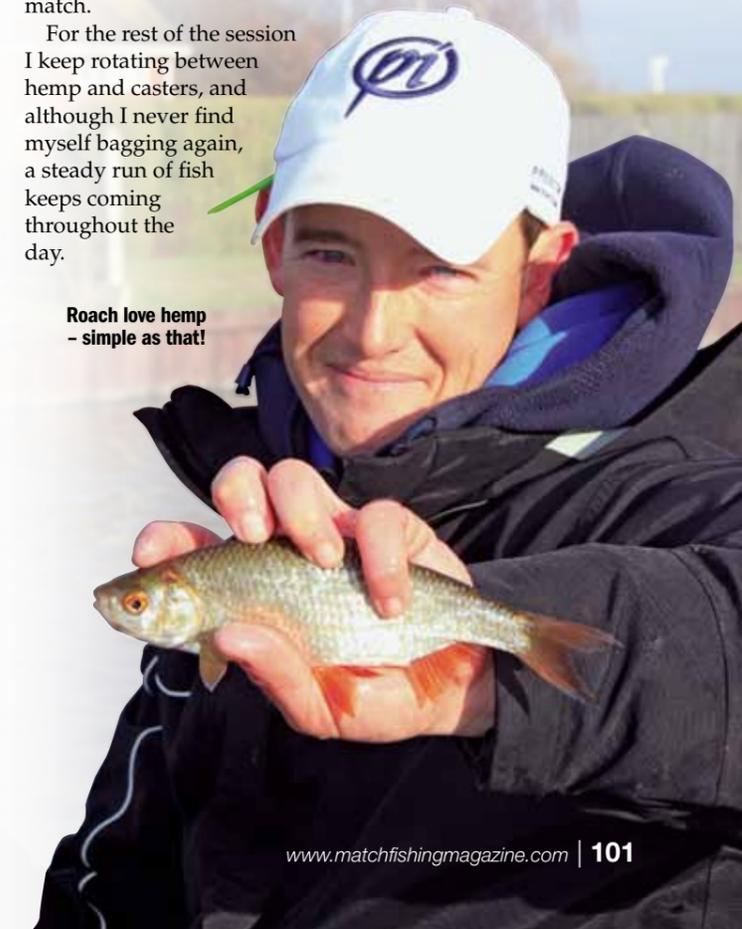
What really is noticeable is that the average size of fish is considerably bigger than what I regularly catch on the canal, and although I am experiencing spells where I am waiting for bites, when they do have a go you can really put a weight together quickly.

Halfway through the session and it's time try hemp again! My pre-pierced bait is straight into the peg and this time there is no waiting around as a 4oz roach takes the bait. The next 20 minutes are prolific, and I am starting to think I will catch a big weight but pike have other ideas and the fish back off. This is one of the problems with baits like hemp and casters; it can often take time to build the fishes' confidence, but it doesn't take much for them to back off. My more reliable

small-fish approach usually means I can keep fish coming all match.

For the rest of the session I keep rotating between hemp and casters, and although I never find myself bagging again, a steady run of fish keeps coming throughout the day.

Roach love hemp - simple as that!



Hook Baits

Single caster is great for quality roach...



... double caster is better for bream...



... while double maggot is a top all-rounder.

