There was a time when the Method was frowned upon in some circles as being too crude, too easy, and more akin to trawling than fishing! Well, how times have changed. As with all methods, the devil is in the detail.

Whilst to the casual observer it might appear that it is a simple case of chucking out a loaded feeder and waiting for the tip to sail around, it is not surprising that some thinking anglers have adapted the Method to up their catch rate substantially.

Today, the Method is, without doubt, the most popular fishing style on commercial fisheries throughout the summer months, and can also be devastating for specimen fish of several species into the bargain. Most of the detractors have either joined the legions of feeder anglers, or gone elsewhere, because the truth is that on the right day the Method really does take some beating. It is not a panacea for bad angling, but when used effectively, just another useful tactic.

Tight Baiting

It is no coincidence that the other development of the last decade that has been hailed as having the biggest impact on fishing – PVA bags – gives the angler pretty much the same advantage as the Method feeder. Namely, a small quantity of bait next to the hook-bait. This is nothing particularly new, but being able to achieve this consistently is where these techniques score. Whilst originally developed by match anglers in the early ’90s, it didn’t take long for the specimen carp lads to catch on to how effective the Method can be. But whereas its popularity still seems to be increasing for pleasure and match fishing, it is still very much undervalued as a big carp technique, and should be used more. I guess that one reason why carp anglers do not use it as much as they perhaps should is that a Method feeder will attract not just carp, but big bream and tench as well. A fact not lost on anglers targeting these species in recent years!

Although originally designed for match fishing, the Method feeder is now the most popular tactic for many anglers. Here, top specialist Paul Garner looks at everything you need to know about it.

Mastering The METHOD

Although I have used them quite a lot, I rarely feel the need to use elasticated Method feeders and prefer to simply semi-fix the feeder. The shock-absorbance provided by elastic is great if you need to fish fine, as it does give an extra margin for error on frail gear. The elastic might also lead to a few less lost fish when using barbless hooks and really short hook-lengths, as the feeder can bounce the hook out when a fish is on the surface. By using a relatively soft rod through and playing fish correctly losses are minimised.

Feeders come in a whole range of sizes and weights. I tend to use the lightest that I can get away with, and rarely more than an ounce of lead. With a sharp hook this is plenty enough to nick the hook point home and give a bolt effect. When loaded with bait this becomes a total weight of close to three ounces, which is as much as most normal feeder and specialist rods are capable of handling.

ANATOMY OF THE METHOD FEEDER

Whilst there is a huge selection of Method feeders available, they fall into one of two basic designs. The choice of which to use really comes down to how far you need to cast and how much bait you want in the swim.

The flat bed match style feeders are obviously less aerodynamic, so are better for short to medium range work, whilst the tri-finned carp feeders can be chucked to the horizon on the right gear. For regular recasting, to create competitive feeding, the flat bed feeders are the way to go because they are faster to load, whilst I prefer to use the finned feeders when I want a ball of feed out there for longer.

The other advantage of the flat feeder is that it is easier to use with pellets as well as groundbait. When combined with a mould that compresses the bait evenly you can produce a perfect payload for the feeder every time. The hook-bait can even be positioned perfectly on top of the feed, putting it in the right position for fast bites.

FlaT Base Feeder

Fins for holding groundbait

Soft insert to pull hook length swivel into for semi-fixed effect

Tail rubber prevents line damage

Light top fin to ensure feeder lands the correct way up

Soft insert to pull hook-length swivel into for semi-fixed effect

Tail rubber prevents line damage

Finned Feeder

Fins for holding groundbait

Soft insert to pull hook-length swivel into for semi-fixed effect

Flat bottom with lead base to ensure feeder lands the correct way up

Tail rubber prevents line damage

Soft insert to pull hook-length swivel into for semi-fixed effect

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**End Tackle**

End tackle is pretty much identical whatever style of feeder I use, being balanced to the time of year and the size and species of fish I am targeting. Although cruder than what the match anglers will use, I like to have a little margin for error as there is a good chance of the hook-length becoming damaged over time and with the short hook-lengths normally used, there is little in the way of shock-absorbance between feeder and hook.

I am a big fan of fluorocarbon hook-lengths, but fishing the Method is one of the few times when I won’t use this material, as I find it too prone to damage. Terminal tackle is likely to get damaged in any number of ways when fishing the Method so you need to use robust rig components. For commercial style fishing where carp up to double figures are expected, then I use 6lb (0.26mm) mono, something like Fox Soft Plus being ideal. I have gone through a number of different hook patterns and for all my short ledgering rigs I use a short Shank, wide gape pattern with a very small micro-barb. When big carp are on the卡特 Nash Gaper hook in a size 8 or 10 is spot-on, for smaller carp and other species a finer wire hook, something like a Korum S4 is preferable. Hook sharpness is paramount, particularly when fishing for bream as they do not give such violent bites that hook themselves as you can expect with carp. With bream the hook really must be as sharp as possible to nick the point home against the weight of the feeder.

**Bait & Presentation**

Almost without exception, I will hair-rig the bait, be it pellet, corn, boilies or meat. The reason for this is simple, and is, once again, purely down to ensuring that the hook is unobstructed and so there is the best chance of the point nicking home against the weight of the feeder. Normally the hair is very short, with the bait just touching the bottom of the bend of the hook. With the fish finding a concentration of food in a small area they will be constantly sucking and blowing at morsels of food. Fish a longer hair and there is a very good chance of the bait being sucked in and not the hook.

Another critical factor is the length of the hook-length. When the fish are feeding confidently, particularly carp, then the shorter the hook-length the better. Many fisheries impose a minimum 4” rule, hence why several companies now sell ready-tied hair rigs of this length. When the fish are really going for it then they will attack the loaded feeder as soon as it is cast, so it makes sense to have the bait as close to the feeder as possible.

When conditions are not so perfect, and when fishing for bream on the Method feeder, a longer hook-length can often pay dividends. For a long time I reconciled the effectiveness of the longer hook-length with the fish backing off from the feeder, but now I am not so sure. Perhaps, instead, it is simply that if you are waiting longer for a bite that the groundbait or pellets will have dispersed over a wider area and so when a fish does come in to feed it is browsing and so the longer link gives them a little more time to get the hook properly into the mouth.

Whatever the reason, increasing the hook-length to around twelve inches, or even eighteen, can bring more bites when the going is tough.

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**SETTING UP A SEMI-FIXED METHOD**

Setting up a semi-fixed Method feeder is quite straightforward. You can use this process for both finned and flat feeders. The important thing is that the swivel that pulls the feeder and hook can be expected with carp. With bream violent bites that hook themselves as paramount, particularly when fishing for bream as they do not give such violent bites that hook themselves as you can expect with carp. With bream the hook really must be as sharp as possible to nick the point home against the weight of the feeder.

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**MATCH OR SPECIMEN STYLE**

There are dozens of feeder rods on the market that are badged up for Method feeder fishing and most do a pretty good job. I like a rod with a fairly through action that will give a slow build up of power and not snatch the feeder on the cast. Quiver tips are normally in the 2-4 ounce range, as they need to balance with the action of the rod, but as they are designed for stillwater use do not need to be overly stiff. Normally I prefer a carbon tip, because it will blend in with the carrier section better than a softer glass tip. Currently I am using a 11 foot Drennan Series-7 Method Feeder rod, which is about right for anything up to forty yards when coupled with a 40 size reel and 8lb Maxima main line.

**SPECIMEN STYLE**

Most of my Method feeder fishing is spent targeting big bream in a more relaxed specimen style with a couple of rods fished with buzzers. Most of us will already own kit that is perfectly adequate for this style of fishing. A heavy feeder rod, or better still a bellow rod of 12 feet in length and around 1¾ Test curve, and a 4000 to 6000 size reel loaded with 8lb Maxima is about right.

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For specimen style Method fishing you want a rod of at least 1.75lb Test curve. The Drennan 11’ Method Feeder is a good choice for up to 40 metres.

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**MATCH STYLE**

Whether I am expecting plenty of bites on a commercial or sitting it out for a specimen, bite indication needs to take into account that you are likely to get plenty of false bites and knocks as the fish roll the feeder around. Obviously, you don’t want to be striking at the slightest linebites and knocks as the fish roll the feeder around. Usually, you will want to be striking at the slightest tremble on the tip, so it really pays to sit on your hands and wait for a positive indication. I like the tip or bobbin to be able to move at least a foot before I strike, so they need to be set up accordingly. Remember, the feeder is semi-fixed, so with that sharp hook you are expecting the fish to give very positive bites as they hose themselves.
HOW TO . . .

**PREPARE SOFTENED FEED PELLETS**

There are several ways of preparing softened pellets to go on the feeder. The quickest method is to use a pellet pump and force the water into the pellets. Using a pump you can prepare a couple of pints of pellets in just a few minutes. If you don’t own a pellet pump then there is an easy, if longer-winded alternative.

1. You can use any size pellet. The smaller the pellet the tighter it can be packed onto the feeder. I normally use Dynamite Baits Swim Stim Original pellets.

2. Add about 60ml of the liquid attractant to a 3 pint bait tub and fill with water. Mix thoroughly to ensure that the attractant has dissolved into the water evenly.

3. Tip the water into a large groundbait bowl and then add a kilo bag of Swim Stim pellets. Mix thoroughly to that the pellets are covered with water.

4. The pellets need to be soaked for different lengths of time depending upon their diameter. For each 1mm of pellet size soak them for 1 minute.

5. Once the correct time is up drain off the pellets. I like to tip them on to a riddle and press them down slightly to remove as much water as possible.

6. Now put the pellets in a large sealable container or plastic bag and seal them up. After ten minutes give them a good shake to separate them.

7. Leave the pellets overnight to soak in the moisture and you’ll have perfect soft pellets that retain their shape, but are sticky enough to use on the feeder.

**METHOD MIXES THROUGH THE YEAR**

Whilst most people still seem to think of the Method feeder as a summer technique that can only be used when the fish are active and feeding well, I believe that it can be used all year round with great results.

**WINTER**

Highly flavoured groundbait only. I am looking to give the odd carp or bream that might be interested in feeding something to home-in on, so I use Dynamite Baits Source Groundbait with 35% of the liquid coming from the matching liquid attractant. This is much stronger smelling than would normally be used, but can bring bites when all else fails. Hook-bait is either a piece of worm or a grain of sweetcorn.

**AUTUMN**

Groundbait with soft pellet feed

Water temperature will now be rising and big weights can be had as the fish are not going to be backing off the feeder. It is important to give them something more substantial to feed on: I now switch to Marine Halibut Groundbait and add softened pellets to the mix as feed. The more confident I feel the fish are feeding, the more pellets I will add. Hook-bait is normally a hookable pellet or if the fish are feeding well, a 10mm boillie.

**SPRING**

Groundbait with soft pellet feed

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**SUMMER**

Pellets rule the roost

The fish are now in full feeding mode and will need something substantial to hold them in the swim. By now I will have switched to just using softened expander pellets on the feeder and will be casting regularly to get plenty of bait in the swim. To get bites faster try using a hookable pellet that is slightly larger than the feed pellets or use two pellets.

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The ‘Doc’ with a Method caught carp. Now spring is on the way it’s time to reap the rewards that wait.

HOW TO . . .

The easiest way of loading a flat Method feeder is to use a mould like the Preston one. This makes a uniform shape and works for both soft pellets and groundbait.

Not only does it produce the correct shape it also places the hook-bait in the perfect position.

**USE A METHOD MOULD**

1. If you want your hook-bait to be on the surface of the pellets you need to place it in the mould first. This is best when the fish are straight on the feeder.

2. The next stage is to fill the mould to the top with pellets. Smooth off the pellets so they are level. If you are using groundbait do exactly the same.

3. Now place the feeder face down on the pellets and push it into the mould. You need to be firm, but don’t overcompress the pellets too much.

4. Finally pop it out of the mould. The finished loaded feeder has the hook-bait in the surface skin of the pellets making it easily accessible to the fish.

**THE CHEERRY ON THE CAKE**

One tactic that has developed out of me wanting to introducing a lot of feed, particularly for bream, but also on my local Earlwood Reservoir for big weights of carp, is to begin the session by spodding out a big bed of 4mm pellets over a large (15 feet square) area and then fishing the feeder over the top of this. This gives the fish a big area to graze over and, hopefully, will keep the big shoals of fish looking for food for a reasonable length of time.

A Method feeder fished over the top of this bed of pellets is really then just the cherry on the cake, giving the fish a focal point in the swim. When fishing like this I make the ball of groundbait around the feeder really sticky so that it will stay on the feeder for an hour or more only very slowly breaking down. The thinking behind this is that the pellets create a bed of feed in the swim, whilst the feeder is really only there to attract fish to the hook-bait.

With spring now, hopefully, well underway the Method feeder will start to come into its own. For my bream fishing, I don’t think I will use anything other than the Method, my confidence in it is that high. With a bit of tweaking to match the conditions there can be fewer more efficient ways of catching big weights of carp and bream, but like any method it is the angler who puts in the effort to learn the nuances who will reap the greatest rewards.