



PELLETS IN WINTER

Shaun Harrison explains how, with a little thought in choosing the right ones, pellets can remain an effective bait through the colder months.

The sheep is Shaun Harrison's hanger; the pellets are the subject of Shaun's eye-opening feature this month. Read on...



ANGLER FILE

SHAUN HARRISON

Age: 43

Nickname: None

UK PB: 40lb 6oz

Sponsors: Quest Baits and Free Spirit

We all know how incredible the sport can be when using pellets as part of our background feed while fishing for our beloved carp. However, with such a vast array of choice things can become a little confusing as to why we should use one type of pellet instead of another. Plus, more importantly, why we shouldn't use certain types of pellet at certain times of the year.

Surely a pellet is a pellet sold in different bags with different smells and suchlike? Actually, that couldn't be further from the truth. Pellets are made for a huge variety of purposes and, in most cases, from vastly different ingredients. Let's skip briefly through a few of these and then concentrate more upon the ones that you should be looking at for your angling at this time of the year and further into the colder months.



He's on fire, as the pellets work again.



Slipping the net under another winter carp.

Pellets, by their very nature, are incredibly user-friendly. They are simply small parcels of a complete food source, albeit aimed at a particular fish or animal. Carp enjoy a vastly varied diet, so pellets prove to be a very convenient food source to feed them.

Trout pellets: These have been in use for carp fishing longer than any of the other pellets listed below. They were always the easiest to source and once carp anglers realised that they were manufactured in many different sizes, as sinkers as well as floaters, many quickly brought them into their baiting armoury and soon realised just how much the carp enjoy eating them. The sizes available range from the almost dust-like trout-fry feed through to around 11mm.

There are many different types of trout pellet available but we carp anglers only need to concern ourselves about their oil content. There are high-oil/fat-content pellets and low-oil/fat versions. Carp enjoy eating them all and can cope with a relatively high-oil diet through the summer months. However, come the winter this is definitely a no-go area. The problem is that the carp struggle to digest the high-oil/fat pellets when their body



Shaun rates pellets highly as a winter bait, but choose the right ones.

Total Tip

Choose pellets with lower oil content as the temperature begins to cool. High-oil baits are difficult for carp to digest in colder conditions.



COLD-WATER ATTRACTION IN A BAG



STEP 1

Shaun makes up his PVA bags and encapsulates the lead inside.



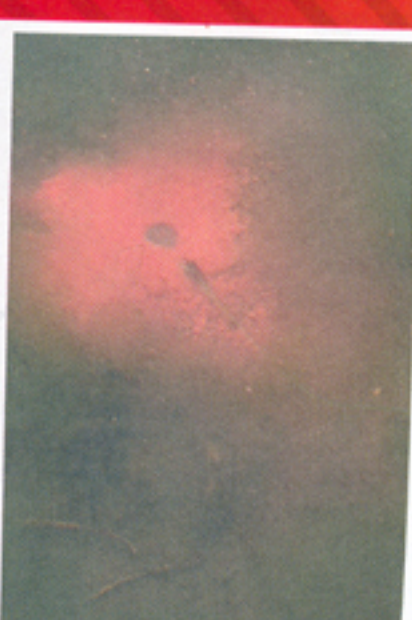
STEP 2

The bag begins to melt immediately. You can still see the hook link.



STEP 3

As the bag melts completely, the hook link is hidden in the pile of pellets...



STEP 4

... that immediately start to leak off their carp attractors.

temperature drops along with the water temperature. We must remember that they are cold-blooded creatures and their metabolism works at a speed in relation to the water/body temperature.

I am aware that this piece is in danger of becoming a little too scientific to be enjoyable or informative as a carp-fishing-related article, so I will quickly steer in a different direction to simply help you catch a few fish.

High-oil-content pellets congeal in cold water and the oil/fat semi solidifies and, more importantly, traps in many of the subtle food signals that the pellets could be giving out. A pellet lower in oil will release more to attract the fish. Check the oil content of the pellets that your dealer is selling. If they can't tell you, then choose a different brand or ask someone who can. Purchasing the wrong type can cost you an awful lot of blank hours on the bank.

Pellets classed as having a high oil content usually contain around 15 per cent of oil/fat and low-oil-content trout pellets are usually around the six per cent level. This is a rough guide but an invaluable one if you intend to continue using trout pellets through the colder months.

Carp pellets: These, as the name suggests, are actually produced for carp, so it doesn't take a rocket scientist to realise that they could be useful for fishing with too. Carp pellets are generally quite low in oil/fat content, again



around five to six per cent, and can be used in moderation during the colder months.

One thing worth thinking about is that most newly stocked fish from fish farmers will have been fed on carp pellets for most of their lives. If I were to give you a bait that the carp had been eating for a long while and they had never been hooked on them or scared of them, and it was something that they would accept as a natural food source, then you may get a little excited. We already have that bait at our disposal – carp pellets. Most newly stocked carp in this country have spent a period of their lives reliant on carp pellets. Need I say any more?

Halibut pellets: I never realised how many anglers fished for halibut until I started to sell halibut pellets. Sorry, only joking. Halibut pellets first came onto the scene with the catfish anglers who found that their quarry loved to gorge themselves on them. Nevertheless, surprising at the time was the number of carp that slipped up on them.

In the early days everyone was using the large sizes, over 20mm, but these days most use the smaller sizes available. Most shops supply them in ranges from around 3mm up to a monstrous 28mm.

There is no denying that the carp like these dark, oily pellets but herein lies a problem when it comes to winter fishing. Halibut pellets contain a massive 18 per cent oil/fat content and are definitely worth avoiding in the cold-water conditions of winter. The carp will invariably eat the odd one but that will then lead on to all sorts of digestive problems. Not only that, but there are plenty of other pellets available that will offer you a much greater chance of getting the fish feeding when the water temperature

HOW TO TIE SHAUN'S PELLET BAGS



STEP 1 Shaun chooses the Fruity Trifle pellets to match his boilies.



STEP 2 He pushes a handful into the bottom of a solid PVA bag.



STEP 3 Next, Shaun crushes a few more pellets and adds them to the bag.



STEP 4 Shaun now places his lead in the top of the bag of pellets.



STEP 5 ... then ties the bag off with some PVA tape. There's no rig yet.



STEP 6 The excess PVA from the bag is then trimmed away with scissors.



STEP 7 The brass loop on the lead is now teased up through the bag.



STEP 8 The loop is then placed into a lead clip and a tail rubber is added.



STEP 9 Next, he pushes a gated stringer needle into the bag, like so.



STEP 10 The needle is latched onto his hook link and pulled back through.



STEP 11 The hook is pulled into the bag and it looks like this so far.



STEP 12 A piece of foam tensions the loop of hook link at the top of the bag.

CARP-BAIT MASTERCLASS



starts to fall.

Believe me, you aren't doing yourself or the carp a favour by feeding these high-oil pellets during winter.

Boilie-matching pellets: This is a difficult one to approach because most boilie manufacturers offer matching pellets to suit their boilie ranges. Some companies produce their own but others simply spray a flavour and dye over the top of another readily available pellet. These are usually low-oil-type pellets so should be okay in the winter, again in moderation, but try and find out first. One easy way to see if they are simply sprayed over with flavour and dye is to break one in half and see if the colour is the same in the middle.

Purpose-made angling pellets: There are a few companies who go down this more expensive route. At Quest Baits we do what we refer to as the maximum-action pellet. These are produced from exactly



the same ingredients as the matching boilie but without the eggs. They work incredibly well during winter – particularly if you choose one that matches one of the all-season boilies. This type of pellet is a little different to most conventional ones, inasmuch as they are purposely made to break down quickly. This gives a soup-type effect around the rig, plenty of stimulation, but very little to feed upon. I have always liked the thought of bait breaking down slowly and disappearing during the cold conditions of winter. Who says that you can't take the bait back out once you have baited up with it?

To be fair, once it has broken down enough all the little creepy crawlies start to move in on the 'dust', so again it enters into the food chain of the fish, even if the fish don't eat it at the time.

Animal-feed pellets: There are numerous different ones available, such as hemp pellets, CSL pellets and so on. I must admit to hardly ever using this type of thing in my fishing but others assure me that they work well during the colder months. It would be worthwhile doing a small test in a clear glass at home before use, just to see how much oil comes out and how quickly they break down. In my



limited experience of the animal-feed pellets, most appear to break down quicker than conventional fish pellets because they were never produced to be thrown in water in the first place. So, in my mind, this breaking-down scenario lends them quite nicely to the disappearing-winter-bait syndrome.



QUICK TIPS

Here's a brief breakdown of Shaun's winter-pellet rules:

- Trout pellets high oil – Definitely NOT
- Trout pellets low oil – Okay
- Carp pellets – Okay
- Halibut pellets – Definitely NOT
- Boilie-matching pellets – Check their oil content
- Purpose-made angling pellets – Check their oil content
- Animal-feed pellets – Generally okay

WINTER CONCLUSION

Avoid any pellet with a high oil content. The oils will trap a lot of goodness and attraction inside the bait, making them less appealing to the carp. This in turn will make it more difficult to catch carp and the few that you do manage to get feeding will then have problems digesting the pellets. This will make them practically impossible to catch the next time you go. If the carp struggle to digest the food, the longer it will be before they need to eat again. Too much fatty food at this time of the year and you might not have any carp to fish for come the following summer.

Pellets have helped Shaun catch numerous winter carp.

