

GETTING TERMINAL



Choose The Right Leader For Best Topwater Action

By John Bette

In musky fishing, one of the most exciting things you can experience is to have a fish stalk and then hit your topwater lure.

Summer topwater fishing is top of the charts in my book. It is hard to find anything that beats it. There are many things that can go wrong, but if everything goes right it can be one of the most satisfying and exciting catches you will experience.

One of the things that can affect the action of your topwater lures is your leader. An important consideration for any lure is the need to make your leaders as “weightless” as possible, and topwater lures certainly will benefit.

Even though a lure may be large in size, do not get caught up thinking you need a heavy leader. Will heavier leaders work? Of course, but you may be missing out on some added action that can make a difference in enticing a musky to hit.

The two most popular types of topwater lures are the prop and walk-the-dog styles. The first focus of this article is the more sensitive of the two, the walk-the-dog or side-to-side action lures. If you are using a standard fluorocarbon or steel leader with a swivel and snap, you may find yourself struggling with these lures nose-diving on you or not swinging enough side to side.

To correct the lure’s action, consider using a solid wire leader without a swivel. Since these lures do not rotate, the swivel is not necessary and eliminating it makes the leader virtually weightless.

You are now tying your line directly to the loop of the leader instead of the end of the swivel, which will take the weight off the nose of the lure. This will allow it to have more swing side to side as well as to keep it from nosing down.

If you prefer to stay with fluorocarbon, understand it will create a little more drag in the water because it is heav-



You can tie your line to a simple loop for swivel-less leaders (left), swivels of wire or fluorocarbon leaders, or to solid rings (far right).

ier and usually wider. Use a solid ring on top of the leader instead of the swivel, rather than tying directly to the fluorocarbon loop. The solid ring will prevent the thin braid from cutting into the fluorocarbon material.

When fishing these lures — especially the larger, heavier ones like the Weagle or One Eyed Willy — be sure to have slack line between your pulls and cranks, something which is called “controlled slack.” Heavy lures need slack line in order to kick out and cause the surface commotion for which they are designed.

Prop-style lures rotate, so you will most likely want to have a swivel on your leader to help ease the rotation. The larger of these types of lures are not as leader-sensitive as walk-the-dog lures, so in most cases standard fluorocarbon musky leaders will get the job done.

Smaller offerings, however, can be greatly affected by the leader.

But again, I prefer a solid wire leader over fluorocarbon regardless of water clarity, due to the fact that the wire will create less drag and allow the lure to achieve optimum performance.

If you are using a well-balanced, prop-style topwater, you will find that you can use the same leader that you use with walk-the-dog style baits because it will not roll on you. Also, some of the smaller prop baits simply run much better with a weightless wire leader as well.

Be sure to put the odds in your favor to take advantage of this fun and rewarding style of fishing.

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