

## “THE IMPORTANCE OF SMELL“



Many bait scents are available for purchase

Scientific studies show that the **only group of gamefish** that feeds to any major degree **by smell** is the **catfish**. Other species may use smell or taste to a slight degree, but **most fish must see a lure to strike it**. The fishes' **lateral line** is a sense organ for **vibrations** that gets the fish **in the vicinity** of its prey, then the **fish uses its sight to strike** its prey. This works for fish **even in dark stained water**, but **muddy water** (less than 6 inches visibility) usually **puts fish off feed**. It is interesting to note that **fish in an aquarium** will often **gulp in floating fish waste**, then spit it out right away. They would not be grabbed if fish fed mostly by smell. Obviously, **some species** have developed a **greater ability to smell prey** (e.g. sharks---blood in the open ocean) due to special circumstances, but **most of our gamefish are primarily sight feeders**. **Walleyes and trout/salmon** might have a slightly better developed sense of smell because they are known to **“prefer” live bait**, are **migratory fish**, and they often inhabit **large, wide open waters** where **smell might be helpful** in locating prey. Even at that, the **huge amount of chemicals and pollution** that man releases into our waterways **could reduce or negate** their ability to use their sense of smell. We just don't know. **Speed is another factor**. A **slowly trolled crawler or minnow** could be **grabbed and tasted**, although they are **often rejected (spit out)** just as easily as an artificial. **More speed is preferred** because it **requires** a fish to **reflex strike** the lure with no time for tasting, and the **hooking is more effective**. With both live bait and artificials, **setting the hook immediately** is usually the best thing to do. Buck Perry states that if one **wishes to use lure scents** and has **confidence** in them, **go ahead**, but depth and speed are the major controls we must pay attention to.

Of the **five major controls** we have in our lures to make fish strike (**depth, speed, color, size, and action**), depth (**where the fish is**) and speed (**velocity of lure** needed to trigger a strike) **are the most important**. Although smell may play a part, it is less than the above listed. It would be **impossible to check all controls at one spot**, so we **take the 2 most important (depth and speed)** and **concentrate on them**, checking them constantly because they **change with weather and water conditions**. Buck Perry has taken his lures, **dipped them in gasoline**, and **caught just as many fish with them to prove a point**. There is a good section on **live bait** in Bucks' book **“Spoonplugging, Your Guide to Lunker Catches”** pages **129-133**, and smell may play a part in that type of fishing. Remember that **we are trying to get fish to reflex strike artificial lures**. At times we may be forced to use **live bait** if the fish are extremely inactive (**slowest speed**).