

MUSKY FISHING WITH SUCKERS

By: Z LEADERS Fishing Rigs

www.zleaders.com

Although you can fish for Muskies with suckers all year long, fall is undoubtedly the most productive and popular time of year. When the leaves are full of color and start to fall, with the water temps dropping into the 50's, Muskies start to put the feedbag on. By using a few sucker fishing tactics and techniques you can greatly improve your odds at catching more Muskies this Fall.

Equipment

- Make sure your boat is outfitted with several rod holders for keeping all sucker rods out of the way while fishing.
- Select a Musky rod that is extra heavy action around 7-8ft long and a baitcasting reel that is equipped with a line-out clicker. Spool up the reel with 80-100# low stretch braided line.

Tackle

- Select a rule-conforming Quick-Strike Sucker Rig or Circle Hook Sucker Rig and tie to your line (See Quick-Strike Rule Regulations for your state). All Z LEADERS Sucker Rigs are rule-conforming. A Quick-Strike Rig that includes 2 treble hooks is generally the most effective for hooking success.
- Make sure all hooks are very sharp! This is very important!
- Affix a rubber core twist on sinker / egg or bell sinker above the Quick-Strike Rig to keep the Sucker at the desired depth and in the strike zone of the fish. Use a 1 oz sinker for 10-13" suckers, 1.5 oz for 13-15" suckers, 2 oz and up for 16+" suckers.
- A musky bobber / float is optional when using any sucker rig setup but tends to get in the way with boat movement, landing fish, and fishing with multiple lines.

Sucker Selection

- The size of your sucker should match the size of the rig you are using for best results. This enables the sucker to move freely, last longer, and trigger more fish to bite.
- The most popular Musky sucker size range is 10-14"
- Too small of a sucker will not have the profile to attract a fish and too large of a sucker will make it more difficult to set the hooks on a fish.
- Unfortunately suckers are not cheap, so make sure you keep them in aerated fresh water and check on them often. The colder the water...the better they will keep.

Location

- Select areas to fish that allow your suckers to be in the water as much as possible to increase your chances – fish spots thoroughly while trying multiple depths.

- Concentrate on fishing deeper water areas from 12-45ft to avoid contact with weeds.
- Key areas include steep breaks, hard bottom areas, fish cribs, and outside of deep weed edges.
- When moving spots gently place entire sucker with the rig in the livewell or separate container (cooler / bucket).

Technique

- The more suckers you are allowed to fish the better. Stagger the depth – keep one up high by where you are casting and figure eighting. Casting may bring additional fish boatside.
- Hook suckers lightly to sucker rigs and avoid deep hooking. Ideally the sucker should break free of the rig when setting the hooks on a fish.
- Place sucker rods in the rod holders and set the line-out clicker to notify you when a fish strikes.
- Check rigged suckers periodically to ensure they are still attached to the rigs properly and are tangle free. When checking, reel suckers in slowly to avoid any undue stress.

Catch & Release

- When a Musky bites the sucker and is taking line out, reel up all other lines and get the net ready. Set the hook as quickly as possible (1-2 minutes) to prevent the fish from completely swallowing any hooks.
- Minimize the amount of line the fish has out by reeling up any slack. When fish begins to move away from you, create about 2 ft of slack line and then set the hook very hard - like you are trying to break the rod!! (exception – circle hook rigs). Set the hook twice if needed.
- If you fail to set hooks into fish, check the sucker to see if the rig is still hooked up properly and place back in the water immediately. Muskies will often bite the sucker again.
- Once the fish is hooked, loosen the drag a bit to help fight the fish. Keep a good bend in the rod at all times. No need to horse the fish in.
- When your fish is in the net, keep it in the water and be very careful removing all the hooks from the fish to avoid injury to yourself or the fish. It's smart to invest in a good pair of extra long nose pliers, jaw spreader tool, and a hook cutter.
- Take 3 quick pictures of your fish. If considering getting a replica fish mount accurately measure length and girth.
- Avoid excessive handling time - return fish to the water ASAP!
- Go back to the exact spot you just caught the fish – more Muskies might be present.

As always, it's a good idea to check with any boat launch signs, local bait shops, or DNR for any regulations specific to fishing. (Trolling, VHS - live bait transportation rules, fish size limits, specific lake rules).

For the largest selection of Musky Sucker Rigs visit: www.zleaders.com