

# The Serious Tackle Box

With Chris Gonzales

## Tube Baits First Class Imposters

**Tube baits, or surgical tube lures,** have been used on the East coast for striped bass, ling, and, in the Florida Keys, on barracuda for many years. They are definitely under-utilized off the Texas coast, and they definitely work. These surgical tubing creations are simple and deadly baits that imitate an eel to a ling, and a needlefish to a kingfish, barracuda or wahoo. It could also be that these predators just don't like them swimming in their part of the Gulf.

These latex surgical tubing bodies are usually 3/8" x 13 to 18"; colors include natural, black, yellow, green, and various shades of pink and red. The hooks I use are Mustad® 10827 BLN in sizes 8/0 and 9/0 - if you prefer trebles, try Mustad's 3561ED in size 3/0 or 4/0. Whichever hook combination you use, remember that the trailer hook must be free swinging at the end of the tubing. Use extreme caution during any part of the assembly or handling of these latex tubing lures. The tubing is tough to cut and any slip of the hand along with sharp, multiple hooks can quickly result in a painful puncture.

Building one of these guys is relatively easy. First, cut your piece of tubing to a length of about 15". Next, cut one end at an angle that results in a 2" taper as shown in the illustration. Now, carefully cut a 1/8" diameter hole, about 6" from the other end; this is where the lead hook will rest. The next steps sort of go together; cut two 20" lengths of 90# 7x7 cable and crimp one end of each one through the 9/0 Mustad hook eye and each other—see the enlarged view of this on the illustration. Bend about 1/2" of the end of each cable back against themselves; these bent ends of the cables will pass through the tubing rather easily. Again, see the illustration. Push the end of each cable through the hole in the tubing, directing one toward each end of the tubing. Push the cables toward the tubing's ends. When the cables come out, pull on them and the hook will approach the hole. Push the hook eye and shank fully into the tubing, pull on the forward end cable to seat the hook bend lightly against the hole in the tubing while also pulling the cable out of the back end of the tubing.

Cleanly cut the bent back portion from each cable. Now is the time to slide the egg weight onto the forward end cable and make the looped-crimped connection that holds your swivel. The egg weight,

which should fit snugly into the tubing when lubricated with light oil, is now carefully pushed into the end of the tubing until flush with the end. At this point, have a round wooden toothpick ready. Pull the cable through the sinker until the hook gently stops moving.

Now, shove the toothpick into the hole in the egg weight until tightly seated and break it off. What this does is hold the hook in the proper position while you work on the rear hook's positioning and cable crimping. Take the rear hook, an 8/0 Mustad 10827BLN, and put it into position in the tubing after taking the slack out of the rear cable; mark the cable with a permanent marker where the back of the hook bend lies. The next move is to pull the front cable through the egg weight to loosen the toothpick. Remove the toothpick. Now you can pull enough cable out of the back end of the tubing to get some work space to attach the trailer hook. The exposed cable will now give you a look at the mark you have previously made. Putting the back of the hook bend on the mark, you can see where the hook eye is in relation to the cable. Mark it here. This is where the loop connection to this hook is formed. Crimp this loop connection now.



### Tube Baits - First Class Imposters



SPRO POWER SWIVEL,  
130#, SIZE 4

SURGICAL TUBING BODY IS 3/8" X 15".  
LEAD HOOK IS LOCATED APPROX. 6"  
FROM END OF TUBING. TRAILER HOOK IS  
FREE SWINGING ON THE FAR END.

10" OF CABLE SHOWING  
WHEN COMPLETED

EGG WEIGHT PRESSED INTO  
TUBING FOR CASTING WEIGHT  
AND INCREASED SWIMMING  
MOTION

BEND OF CABLE  
ENDS FOR RUNNING THEM  
THROUGH TUBING BODY

MUSTAD 10827BLN  
ULTRA POINT  
HOOKS 9/0 LEAD  
& 8/0 TRAILER

THESE ARE THE INTERLOCKED  
POSITIONS OF THE CABLE LOOPS IN  
RELATION TO THE HOOK EYE REFERRED TO IN  
THE ARTICLE. AFTER THESE CRIMPED CONNECTIONS  
ARE MADE AND THE CABLE ENDS ARE BENT AS SHOWN ABOVE, THREAD  
THE CABLES THROUGH THE TUBING AS DESCRIBED IN THE ARTICLE.

When this loop is completed, pull on the swivel until the lead hook gently seats against the hole in the tubing. At that point, the trailing hook should be slightly free swinging and not “bottomed out” on the end of the tubing. If the inside of the hook bend is riding on the end of the tubing, carefully cut the taper of the tubing to a steeper angle to get the hook bend clearance required. The tube lure will spin erratically if the trailer hook bottoms out against the end of the tube on the retrieve.

When casting for kingfish, thumb the reel spool before landing on the cast and your tube is straightened and unfouled...ready to be retrieved and hooked up. Burn it back as fast as you can; a high-speed reel with a 6.1:1 retrieve ratio is a definite plus. Do this high-speed retrieve with the rod tip pointed at the line’s entry into the water. At a “blow-up”, keep winding until you feel the weight of the fish. If a kingfish misses and skyrockets out of the water, don’t slow your retrieve while you gaze at this beauty of nature; a schoolmate may quickly follow the “skyrocket”. I’ve never cast one to a wahoo, but I’d do it in a heartbeat—the same goes for a near-surface, cruising dolphin. If you don’t get a hookup while casting at kingfish or wahoo, slow your retrieve radically about 20’ away from the boat. This could save you from having a face or chest full of kingfish or wahoo that was chasing the lure at high speed and comes out of the water, launching itself toward you.

Cast ahead of and across the swimming path of a near-surface

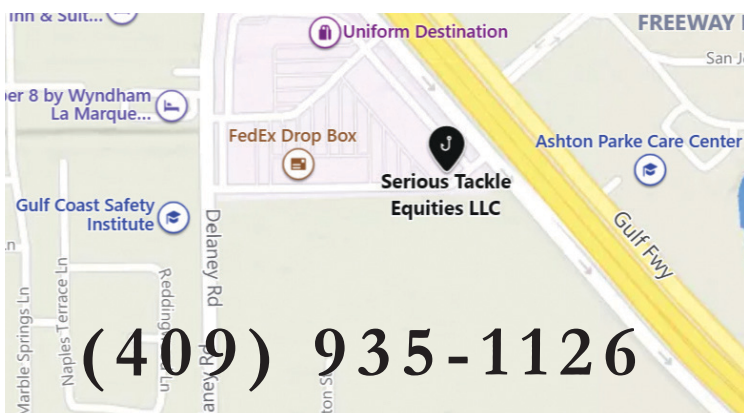
cruising ling, using a medium to fast retrieve. If the ling approaches but stops short, do one or both of these things...wind faster or stop it and let it sink. These are escape looks of a live eel, running away or diving for the relative safety of the bottom. With ling or dolphin swimming near the boat, wind the tube lure close to the rod tip and make a fast, “figure-8” motion with your rod tip just above the surface. Ling, in particular, will many times respond with a strike; it’s an old trick that musky fishermen have used for many years. These tube baits are indeed first-class imposters of an eel or needlefish. Using them properly will bring success that will put a different bounce in your step on the dock at the end of the day.

If you have any questions, stop by Serious Tackle  
or email me at  
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