

Fishing – if you are tempted then don't splash your cash

With lock down eased north of the Border angling, phones were ringing off the hook at fisheries.

Many of the calls are from newcomers who have been tempted to try fishing which is one of Britain's leading participant sports.

Jim Gargaro, a former Edinburgh fishing tackle shop owner, and now the host at popular Bowden Springs fishery near Linlithgow, is ideally placed to advise.

His top tip is not to splash the cash.

Jim, a former Scottish international angler, suggested trying one of the kits, either fly fishing or coarse angling, as a starting place.

His contacts in the trade indicated that a rod, reel with line, and the basic essentials are available for around £50.

And Jim said: "The kit will get you going and, hopefully, catch a fish. Or course, you can spend as much as you like online or in a specialist angling shop, once they open, but you don't need to.

"The main object, particularly with youngsters, is to get a line in the water and to catch a fish. You never forget hooking and landing that first fish.

"I still remember my first fish and I've been in and around the sport for over 50 years."

For fly fishing, Jim recommends a rod or around 9ft which is easy to handle, a floating fly line and a tippet or around 8lb which should suit most local fisheries.

The tippet – the fluorocarbon or monofilament which links the fly line to the fly – should be around 4lb or less if you are fishing a river like the Tweed, Clyde or Water of Leith.

He also argued that you don't need expensive waders. Go for a pair of wellies or, if you do want to wade, buy thigh waders which link onto a belt.

They can cost around £30 and are easy to store and you should have a cheap net and a wading staff to help keep your footing if you decide to cast a line in a river.

Flies can be bought online and there are a myriad of companies to choose from with varying prices and Jim said: "Find out, if you can, which flies work best on the river or reservoir you are likely to fish on.

"If you come here (Bowden Springs) or to any local reservoir, ask the proprietor which flies work best and then normally have a supply you can buy.

"If you tie your own, still ask the same question, but a quick call to the fishery to check the best flies of the moment can save a lot of time and can allow you to tie before you arrive."

Buzzers are a favourite pick and they are, he said, easy to tie and always available on line and Jim added: "You don't need many flies, an assortment of 15 to 20 will get you going and you also don't need to be a casting expert to catch fish. Remember to try the margins near the bank as they can be very productive."

Jim has two lakes at Bowden, a two-acre fly pond and a five-acre bait pond and he said the same advice goes for those who bait fish.

He said: "Keep it simple. Buy a kit. Decide to go with float fishing, which means you have to find the depth as fish feed

on the bottom, or feeder fishing which can be very effective.

“Basically, you have your bait next to a cage stuffed with food and sitting on the bottom. Take a look at YouTube to get some tips and ask for advice. Anglers are generally helpful and will give advice when asked.”

He concluded: “Don’t expect too much too soon. You have to be patient and it helps to approach the water quietly and not make a noise.

“Fishing a river with trees and undergrowth can be challenging and, when fly fishing, always wear a hat and sunglasses. Remember a fly travels at some speed and you do not want a hook stuck in your head or a hook in your eye.”