

Reef Hawg Tuning

- Jdsplasher (Jim) Reef Hawg. Those that float nose-up are usually golden. Modifications. Remove cotter pins and hooks. Weight the 2 holes, using worm bullet weights in each of the holes as they are key to having this bait swing and dance side to side. Then 1-1/4" screw eye in the middle of those 2 weight points with a split ringed 5/0 L774 hook and a rear split ring 4/0 hook. OR drill hole about a 1/2 of an inch back from the front hook. I use screw inserts weights, small reef Hawgs take about 1/4 to 3/8 oz., large 1/2 to 3/4 oz. Sometimes the hooks are not centered so make sure the weight is. The correct drill bit size is 5/64 for the .092 and 1/16 for the .072 hook hanger screws. 1-1.5 inch long.
- Interesting mods there Jim, sounds like a winner. I have a few 'money' 6"ers that I've taken the center hook off, replacing the front with a 4/0 774. I avoid alot of eye hooking with this rig, and can unhook smaller to medium sized Muskies much quicker/safer and get back to fishing. That is now a hooking machine in need of no further mods unless I want more head swing in the current, at which point I weight rear of center. Each one is different. Experiment, enjoy.
- Pete Stoltman says: Place it in some water (kitchen sink, bathtub, etc.) and see how it sits. Should have at least some tail-down attitude. If it just sits level that could indicate one that is at least tougher to work. If that's the case usually a small weight will help adjust and make it work better. I usually find placing a screw in weight just ahead of the center hook will get the tail down position I want. Prefer Berm's weight kits myself and usually just a little bit of weight in the right position will do the trick. A simple fix could also be just wrapping a little lead core solder around either the center or tail hook. Can't say I've ever run across a Reef Hawg that couldn't be fixed with a little modification.

Split Rings:

"I have had a reef hawg for years that is my go to bait. I have re-sharpened the hooks to nubs now and I am wondering; if I cut the hooks off and replace them with a split ring and hooks, is this going to disturb the action? I can't imagine that it would but if anybody has any experience with this it would be much appreciated."

- Pete Stoltman says: There are two schools of thought. Some people feel that split rings change the action of the Reef Hawg and if you need to replace hooks you need to pull the cotter pin that is used for the hook hangers. I've tried both ways and haven't really found adding split rings affected the action much at all. Look at it this way, if you add split rings and the bait doesn't do what it's supposed to do, take 'em off and go the old school route with the cotter pin hook hangers holding the hooks.
- It's best not to split ring them on. It does change the action. Take a flat tip screw driver and pry the cotter pin up from the back of the bait. Straighten it out and pull it out the belly side so you can remove the hook. You should be able to reuse the cotter pin once without it breaking. If not you can replace it with a stainless steel cotter. An 8" reef hawg uses a 5/0 eagle claw 774 as a hook if you want to replace the hook with one the original style.

- In my experience, it seemed to vary bait-to-bait. I caught quite a few on a certain 6", to the point where virtually no paint remained and was heavily chewed. Its action remained great until I had to cut hooks and went to the split rings. Unfortunately, it never worked the same again. But also had an 8" that previously went through the same scenario and action seemed to be unaffected. Had another special 6" where I had to do the same thing. Action was still OK, but not quite what it used to be.
- My experience as well. Most seem to run best without split rings....just my experience.
- I have been using reef hawks for over 12 yrs , my main bait, if you use it alot you must change the cotter pins once in a while regardless if the hooks are still good. they do wear out. Love those baits, if your a reef hater send them my way.
- Why? They run better with the 774 eagle claws attached straight to the bait by cotter pins.
- I'm with Steve on this. Leave em alone. The action you lose when split ringing is more noticeable that the leverage a big fish might not get.. The only cotters I have ever had open up were in the net. I wouldn't T the hooks either. You will save wear on the lure, but decrease hooking %.

6, 8 and 10 Inch Reef Hawk Differences?

- Weighting will always be a personal preference and will also depend on the piece of wood that was used and how much water the bait has sucked up.
- In general, the 6" is the most erratic and you can move it the fastest.
- The 8" is slightly less erratic and works better at slow to medium speed retrieves.
- The 10" is more of a dive-and-rise than a glider and works well as a jerk-trolling bait.