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Subject: : Gear Talk

Topic: : Fly Line Maintenance - Separating Truth from Fiction

Fly Line Maintenance - Separating Truth from Fiction

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Okay. I have just spent 90 bucks on a fly line from Orvis for this season. I really want to keep it clean and get as many years out of it as I can.

I am trying to separate the truth from the lies/fictions out there as far as Fly Line Maintenance is concerned. Below is a post from a thread on said topic I found on "The Fly Fishing Forum" (I think that's where it was).

But this guy says you should clean your line multiple times a day! Has he any idea how to do that? Pull out 90 FEET of fly line and clean it in a dirty environment? It's going to get dirty again while your cleaning it, forget about once you put it back in the water!

Please read below and lend me your experience, advice and knowledge gentlemen. And thanks again for the Jamboree it was awesome!

QUOTED TEXT BEGIN:

TLC For Fly Lines  
By Dan Blanton  
Fly lines aren't the most expensive part of your marine fly fishing equipment but they aren't cheap, either. Most will cost you better than 50 bucks if they're worth having and with tender loving care, will perform well for many seasons. Abuse them, and you'll be reaching deep into your pocket sooner than you'd like. The following is some good advise on how to provide TLC for your fly lines.  
**WHY KEEP YOUR LINE CLEAN**  
Keeping your line clean and free of dirt and other substances such as algae, will help to prolong its life as well as good casting and floating characteristics. Dirt and algae build-up on a fly line can markedly reduce both its shootability and floatability. A coating of dirt prevents lines like those produced by Scientific Anglers, which have both an internal silicone lubricating system, and a hydrophobic (water resistant) chemical in the line's coating for better floatation, from working properly. Dirt and other contaminants don't prevent the silicone lubricant from surfacing as it should, but the effect is like having a good lubricant between two metal surfaces and then ruining it by adding dirt and grit. Dirt and algae also overcoats the line's hydrophobic chemical, which nullifies its water repelling abilities causing the fly line to sit lower in the surface film.  
**CLEANING YOUR FLY LINE**  
Until recently, I was under the mistaken impression that there were a number of good commercial fly line cleaners being marketed by leading fly line companies and fly fishing specialty houses. Actually, most of the available products are only a line dressing, and are not really a thorough cleaner. They are a lubricant dressing that only top coats the line, temporarily covering up the dirt and making the line shoot better for awhile. Sure, you'll see dirt residue on the application pad or cloth, but you'd get the same results if you used a damp cloth to wipe the line. Over time, superficial line dressings will seal in dirt and algae, and prevent the internal, self lubricating silicone ingredient in SA and similar lines from doing its job. Ditto for the hydrophobic chemical intended to make the line float higher on the surface. It's similar to Scotch-Guarding your furniture before you had it cleaned - all you did was seal in the dirt... Now don't get me wrong, dressing your fly line several times a day with a good line dresser is a good idea, especially if it's hot and windy. Your line will

shoot better and chances of line tangles will be markedly reduced. Line tangles often rob you of rare opportunity. But in addition to dressing, you need to really clean your fly line periodically. In really dirty or algae laden waters, you should clean it a couple of times per day. Liquid line cleaner/dressers, especially those provided by the manufacture are best and won't harm the line's finish. Avoid using cleaners that are not designed expressly for fly lines. You can trust Cortland's line cleaner, for example, not to harm their lines, or anyone else's for that matter. Scientific Anglers has a different line cleaner/dressing package which approaches line cleaning from a different perspective. Scientific Anglers line cleaner is basically an easily carried (vest or shirt pocket), unobtrusive, 2" by 3" pad about 1/8 inch thick with a micro abrasive pad. You actually sand-paper the line with the mild abrasive pad. The abrasive removes ground in dirt and grime, but won't hurt the line's finish. This can be done while the line is wet or dry. Once the line is clean, you can dress it with the provided lubricant, although with SA lines, it isn't really necessary because of the internal silicone lubricant that continually weeps to the surface. The hydrophobic chemical is part of the line's finish and the sanding will not harm it and the line will float like new. What about sinking fly lines? Generally, I never clean a sinking line regardless of it's type. Full sinking lines or shooting heads don't need to be cleaned or dressed and only the floating running line portion of other types, such as sink tips or Teeny lines or some of the new specialized striper lines need to be cleaned and dressed. Coated shooting lines, such as SA's Mastery saltwater shooting line, should be cleaned and dressed frequently to preserve both the line's finish and shootability. Mono shooting line (not braided) should be frequently dressed, but don't use an abrasive cleaner on it. I also wouldn't advise using the abrasive pad on any clear fly line, sinking or floating, since it would make the line become somewhat opaque and more visible. What about salt build-up? Only so much salt can accumulate on the line's coating and each time you use it again, the salt coating will dissolve when it gets wet. A wet salt coating can actually become fairly slick and may aid casting to some degree.

#### TYPES OF LINE DRESSING

There are several types of line dressing available: Glide from Umpqua; Rush Peak's line dressing (makes it so slick you can hardly hold on to it); Maxima Mono slick and others such as the ones provided by Cortland and SA.

#### A LINE DRESSING YOU SHOULD NEVER USE

There is one type of dressing that many folks use, including myself, which I recently learned, should never be used on a fly line. It's the old mucilin type of dressing, a sort of paste/wax that was originally used to dress braided silk fly lines to make them float. It removes the plasticizers in the line's coating, the chemical which makes plastics soft and flexible. Once removed in sufficient quantity, the line becomes stiff and brittle and line's coating will begin to crack. Line manufacturers are working with the producers of mucilin products to inform folks not to use mucilin on modern fly lines.

#### OTHER DON'TS

Sun and heat are two of the worst things you can expose your fly line (or mono) to. You ever notice that blue-gray film on the inside of your cars windshield? Most folks thinks it's just dirt. It's not. It's plasticizer evaporated from you car's vinyl interior. Dashes crack and so do seat covers. Sun and heat do the same damage to your fly lines! One of the worst places to store or transport your lines is in the trunk of your car. Don't purchase a fly line that has been on a shelf in front of a window, it may be already damaged from heat and UV light. Avoid contacting your lines with solvents, gasoline, sunscreens and insect repellents. All will damage your line's coating by removing plasticizers and other needed chemicals. Some of these will dissolve the lines coating.

With a little TLC and the frequent use of good line maintenance products, your expensive fly lines should provide you many seasons of hard and productive use, before you have to reach deep into your wallet for the price of replacing it.

by Dan Blanton