



VASS-TEX 650 CHEST WADERS

Good quality waders can be one of the more expensive items of equipment any sea angler can buy. Thankfully VASS have now released a budget-friendly range which Joe Whyte put through their paces on the east coast of Scotland



I've had a fair bit of Vass-Tex gear over the years; the lightweight summer smock is a favourite, as are my trusty studded and fur-lined R- boots. I've owned a pair of the studded 700-series chest waders for many years, which probably have had more use and abuse than they're actually designed for. Those are fairly standard studded waders; I've used them on the roughest of east coast rock marks as well as yomped a considerable distance in them in the summer (that was a lesson quickly learned!) and stood around in all weathers wearing them. They do what they are designed for and I've most definitely had my money's worth from them over the years. They've been repaired once (a leaky stud in the sole) but given the miles they've put in that's hardly surprising and they are still in use regularly to this day.

Vass invited me to road test their new and keener-priced range of waders; the "entry-level" Vass-Tex 650 chest waders are most certainly not cheap and cheerful. On first inspection, there's little to differentiate between these and my more expensive set other than they are clearly lighter-weight and the boot is a little shorter and with a lower profile which makes getting them on and off easy.

LIGHT WEIGHT

I guess that the lighter material makes these slightly less durable than the heavyweight range, but you'd probably have to put some serious stress on them to actually damage them; they seem pretty robust and extremely well-made. The lighter material makes them a better choice for better-weather angling or if you plan on putting

the hard yards down on your way in and out of a mark. They're comfortable too and there's plenty of room to layer up with clothing, or for the better-built among us!

SOLE OPTIONS

The waders come in a choice of the standard cleated sole or with a tungsten studded sole for better grip on weed, wet rocks and other underwater hazards. At this price point, you are unlikely to get tungsten studs on any other brand of waders and that in itself is a pretty good reason to consider these if you're shopping for a pair. I'm a sucker for studded boots: the marks I fish are often treacherous underfoot and having slipped and went down on one knee fully laden a few years back, I'm wary of going out without them.



The 650s took a couple of trips, the first to Usan Flat Rock near Arbroath which is a climb over a bit of a wet and wild moonscape and deep-rockpool covered area which can be a challenge in wet and windy weather. I certainly felt warm and comfortable throughout and the waders stood up with no issues. As mentioned, the tungsten studs made me feel as if I had a great grip, particularly on the way down the wet rocks. The little front pocket (and my pockets underneath) was easily accessible and a handy place to keep my scissors and bait elastic. The VASS braces felt secure and I was warm and comfortable throughout. Waders are always good for keeping crab and cart juice off you, too!

The second trip was to Easthaven, which is a rocky area just north of the beach of the same name. This was a similar type of area to the last but without the climb. However, there's a fair walk from the parking to the mark so the 650s got a workout. Again, I was pretty comfortable taking my time walking the half-mile or so to the mark; walking in waders fully laden with gear isn't something you'd do for pleasure. The waders were in and out of the sea at this point, albeit only to knee level, and again I felt safe and secure despite the rain and wind.

The final spot I tried was to get right into the water at Arbroath Victoria Park beach during the day. There was a bit of a sea running but I managed to get out to around waist height with no issues. A quick stamp before getting into the car and the sand was off them, ready for the next trip.

If you're after a pair of waders from one of the most reputable manufacturers worldwide I can't fault these at all for the price. VASS have used their know-how and experience to craft a product that completely outweighs its excellent price point. ■