

11 YEARS AFTER ANTIFOULING

GRANT ROWE APPLIES COPPERCOAT FOR ONLY SECOND TIME TO 'HOOKER'

Grant Rowe first researched copper based epoxies in 1998, looking for the answer to eliminate the hassle of yearly antifouling. He chose Coppercoat, manufactured and distributed by Aquarius Marine Coatings in Dorset, United Kingdom.

"There were several other copper metal based treatments on the market, many of which had a poor reputation on online cruising forums. I only speak of only Coppercoat from Aquarius Marine in the UK and marketed and sold by MEC Marine Ltd NZ.

Coppercoat is an epoxy based long lasting and non leaching antifoul and is a great overall solution to minimise the annual expenditure associated with regular haul out maintenance.

Rowe's launch 'Hooker' is a 34ft Vindex, after 11 years of heavy use, "'Hooker' was in need of a few more layers of Coppercoat. In December 2009 'Hookers' hull was prepared and an additional four coats of Coppercoat were applied for a further ten years of hassle free boating".

Below is a step by step guide to the application on 'Hooker'.

Like all epoxy coatings, adhesion is critically dependent on the preparation of the underlying surface. All traces of antifouling, grease and dirt must be removed and the clean surface must be abraded. The best solution is to have the hull grit or high pressure water blast which was undertaken on 'Hookers' hull in this case.

As with normal abrading antifoul preparing the hull is 90% of the task and certainly the deciding factor when considering the cost benefit ratio of applying Coppercoat.

It is imperative to remove all traces of any 'one pack' or solvent based products, such as primers and base coats, so in all but a new build this means sanding right back to Gel.

MEC Marine does advise however, that it is not necessary to remove the epoxy primer providing it is in good overall condition, two pack primed and suitably keyed. In 'Hookers' case the existing Coppercoat hull had to be abraded as it had slowly worn away over the 11 years since the first application. This was abraded with the recommended 140 grit sand paper to provide a mechanical key.

Although this level of preparation is quite intensive, it is not without benefit as a good inspection of the hull at this stage can reveal areas of damage or defects to the gel that would normally be hidden. It's a bonus that any such problems can be rectified easily and relatively cheaply at this point. No matter the age of a launch/yacht, being able to check the hull to this degree can never be a bad thing.



Mixing Coppercoat

Once the hull has been prepared, the actual application of the product is as simple as any other antifouling, making the product relatively safe and pleasant to handle in much the same way as an emulsion versus gloss paint, is at home.

"MEC Marine's claim that two people are able to completely apply all 4 coats on an average sized yacht in one day is perhaps a little optimistic, but not impossible. A team of three with the third person to mix the 3 pack product was ideal."

"Another thing to note the boat will require a lift movement to reposition the struts to attend to these areas. This will extend your length of stay on the hard stand.

Coppercoat was applied in near perfect conditions - 22 degrees and a strong breeze throughout the afternoon. MEC Marine recommends a minimum of 72 hrs for full cure. Coppercoat is a water-based two-part epoxy resin, into which pure copper metal powder is mixed just before it is applied. This is really easy to do as everything comes in one-dose containers and comes with comprehensive instructions including a DVD. "



Rolling on the third coat

'Hooker' is 34ft Vindex and required 9 litres of Coppercoat. This allowed for four full coats of Coppercoat. The cradle patches and a good proportion of the keel were left to coat once the hull had cured and allowed to move the boat forward.

In material costs, Coppercoat is approximately 50% more expensive than the equivalent good quality ablative antifouling alternative, and add one extra lift movement charge (to reposition the struts) and an extra 3 days worth of yard time in comparison to hauling solely to antifoul.

The time and potential labour costs of sanding the hull back to gel, is dependant on whom would do the work, and in the case of standard antifouling whether the existing base coats are good enough to warrant just a reapplication on top of abrading coats.



Finished vessel

However, if the hull is in need of a good sanding back, then there would be little difference in preparation between the two.

For anyone wishing to give their hull a good retreatment then Coppercoat must be considered as economically viable, as preparation in both cases is the greatest expense bar the purchase of the antifoul itself.

GRANT ROWE'S SUMMARY

"Aquarius Marine Coatings Coppercoat performance claim of excess of ten years is completely true in my case, with 11 years of heavy use in the very dirty and renowned heavy growth of Port Taranaki.

In terms of additional speed, 'Hooker' like myself is in the formative years and speed has never been an issue. However also moored in Port Taranaki is the 60 foot Tennat Power Catamaran 'Game Player,' which had Coppercoat applied to her in April 2009, have seen a definite increase in performance from Coppercoat antifouling in both fuel consumption and in speed."

In general consideration, Coppercoat should effectively pay for itself after 3 years when compared to the regular maintenance of abrading antifouls, even if the anodes and propeller require some attention during the period.

"MEC Marine claims that Coppercoat is effective for at least ten years and I have proven this in NZ waters. A yearly pressure wash and a burnish every four years is all it needs to maintain its effectiveness.

The cost bi-annually for labour, undercoats and other antifoul would be triple the initial cost plus an inconvenience factor. I have no doubt in my mind of the many other benefits I have enjoyed through using this product even though the initial outlay at the time was a bit daunting. Would I use the product in the future? Only a fool wouldn't!!"

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