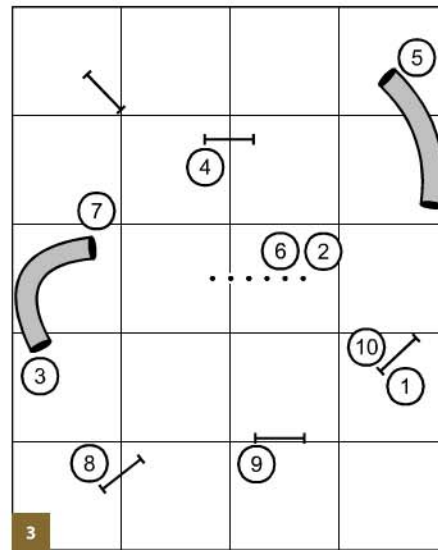
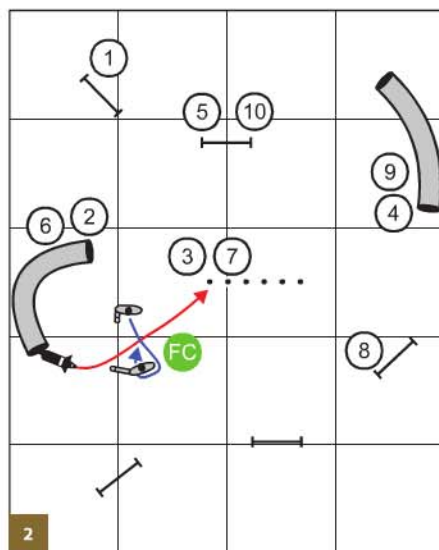
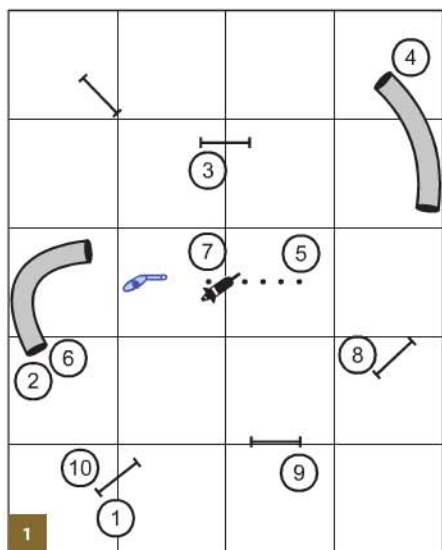


Improve Your  
Handling Skills  
at Home

# Backyard Dogs

By Karen Holik



This month's exercises focus on weave entries and exits and some fun jump work. I have found that weave pole entries are getting more difficult in all venues. The more you practice them, the more confidence you will have on course. The weave poles should be an obstacle your dog performs independently of you. This will enable you to get ahead of your dog to best handle the next sequence.

**Figure 1** has some straightforward weave entries that are made more difficult by your dog blasting out of the tunnel before them. If you keep your dog on your left through the #5 poles, you will need to be ahead to cue the entrance to the #6 tunnel. If you are not ahead of your dog as shown, you risk sending your dog to the incorrect tunnel

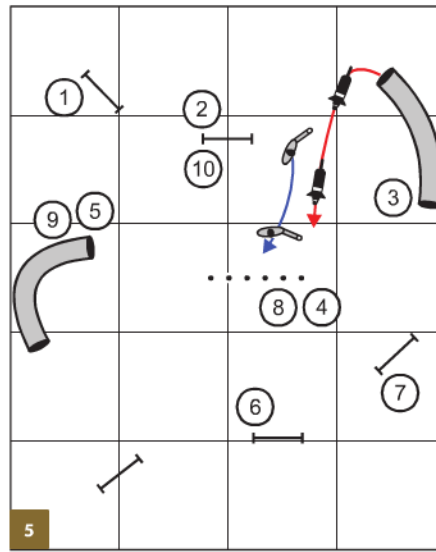
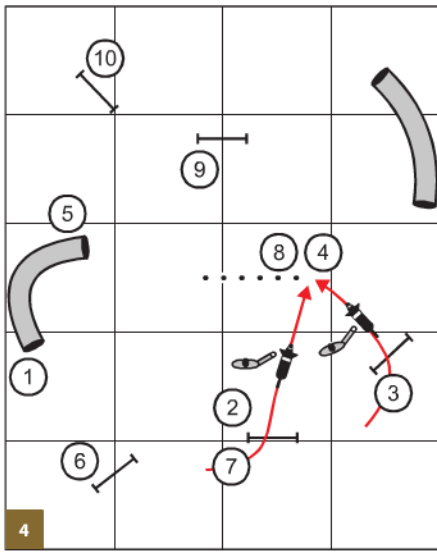
entrance. You could also choose to do a rear cross at the poles, which is difficult in this sequence, and then pull your dog to the #6 tunnel.

**Figure 2** has more entrances to the weave poles after tunnels. If you can do a front cross as shown for both entrances to the poles (#2 to #3 and #6 to #7), you will give your dog a more direct path to the poles, which will result in a faster course time.

In **Figure 3**, it would probably be best to have the dog on your left through the #2 poles, so that after you push to the tunnel you are in a good position to send to #4 and #5. Or, you could have the dog on your right through the poles and do a front cross at the end. Either way, remember how

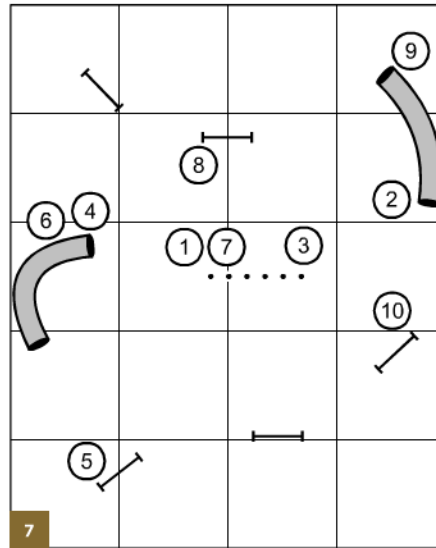
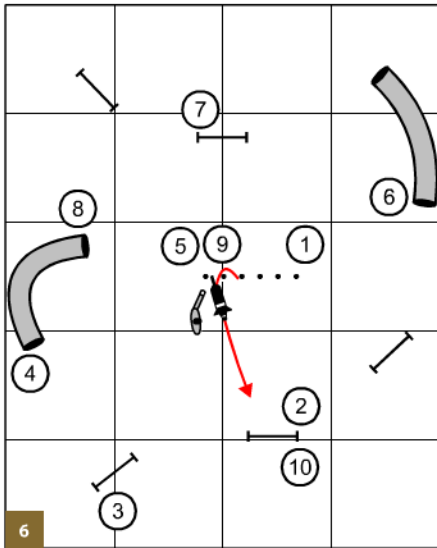
important is it that you show your dog the correct end of the tunnel before he exits the poles, either by being ahead of the dog or by doing a rear cross as close to the correct tunnel entrance as possible. I would suggest doing either a rear cross at the #6 poles or doing a front cross at the end of the poles so that you are in a better position to handle jumps #8, #9 and #10.

**Figure 4** has some tough entries, with your dog having to work on your right side. Make sure you do not block your dog's view of the poles with your body. Remember: if your dog can't see the poles until he is almost in them, he can't collect himself to make the entry. Stay out of the dog's path and let the dog drive ahead of you to the poles as illustrated.



**Figure 5** has a difficult entry to the poles from the #3 tunnel. A front cross after the tunnel is best to slow down your dog and let him know he is turning to his left. Make sure, as in the previous drill, you do not block your dog's sight of the poles by getting in front of him. Stay out of his way as illustrated. To avoid the off-course jump after the #5 tunnel, call your dog's name as he exits the tunnel to make him aware that he is not going straight.

**Figure 6** is probably best handled by starting with your dog on your right and then doing a front cross at the end of the #1 weaves to put the dog on the left for #2. Try performing your front cross while the dog is at pole 3 or 4. This will ensure that the dog knows he is turning and will make an efficient exit from the poles as shown. Do a front cross to cue the turn out of the #8 tunnel and get a straight line to the weaves as discussed for the exercise in Figure 2.



**Figure 7** lets you practice some of the skills from previous drills, for example, a front cross from the #2 tunnel to the #3 weaves and again from the #6 tunnel to the #7 weaves. It also contains a hard exit from the #7 poles to jump #8. Can you get your dog to wrap the last pole and take a straight line to jump #8?

**Figures 8 through 10** contain some pretty tough exercises if you are up to them. You will probably never see these types of challenges on an actual course, but they will make you train harder. They will also benefit your USDAA Snooker runs, when your dog is running at full speed and must concentrate on making his weave entry. 🐾

