

Improve Your  
Handling Skills  
at Home

# Backyard Dogs



By Karen Holik

This month's exercises focus on serpentines and layering. When we see serpentines at a trial, we rarely see them with more than three jumps. When I practice them at home, however, I always try to use at least four jumps (if not more). If you have never done this before, you will notice that the fourth jump is always the hardest.

In **Figures 1 and 2**, try to work the serpentine from both sides: try it staying on the right side of jumps #4, #5, #6 and #7, and also try it on the left side by leaving your dog in the poles and crossing on the landing side of jump #4. If you notice your dog's path is wider on one side, lower the jump bars or break down the sequence until he is successful.

**Figures 3 through 6** offer more opportunities to work your serpentines from both sides.

**Figures 7 and 8** contain some layering exercises. In Figure 7 you can either stay on the left side of the four jumps and try to send to the weave poles or stay on the right side and see if you can send to the tunnel. If the distance is too great, you can move the tunnel and weave poles in closer so the dog can be successful.

**Figures 9 through 12** include some threadles to really test your handling skills. The next time you see a three-jump serpentine in a course, you and your dog should make it look easy! 🐾

*Karen Holik has been involved in agility for over 10 years as a competitor and also a USDAA and AKC judge. She has competed in the finals of the USDAA Grand Prix World Championships with all four of her dogs on six different occasions. Her youngest dog, MACH Triune's Feelin Hot Hot Hot (a.k.a. Sizzle) won the USDAA Steeplechase Finals in 2003. Karen and Sizzle were members of the AKC/USA World Team in 2003 and were chosen again to be part of the team in 2005. Karen offers private lessons and seminars and can be reached at [oncourseagility@comcast.net](mailto:oncourseagility@comcast.net).*



