

SKILL OF THE MONTH

BY KAREN HOLIK

This month's exercises focus on lead-outs. A lead-out enables you to leave your dog at the start line and get a head start on course. It's a skill you need if you simply want to get ahead of your dog on course or if you're setting up for a tricky sequence. Sometimes a lead-out is difficult because of the angles of the jumps or obstacles **involved** and sometimes it is difficult because the first or second obstacle in the sequence **is** something you have never tried to recall your dog over or through, such as the tire, closed tunnel, or open tunnel. By practicing lead-outs with different obstacles and difficult angles, you will develop the confidence you need to attempt them in the ring.

Figures 1, 2, and 3 have several different lead-outs to try. For each sequence, begin by leading out just past obstacle #1. Then try leading out just past obstacle #2 and then past obstacle #3. Alternately reward your dog for staying at the start line and for driving to your lead-out position. Reward with toys or food, but also remember to reward only with verbal praise at times, since you won't be able to use food or toys on course. I try to get my dogs as excited as possible for these exercises since I know that is the way they will be at the trial.

A lead-out from the table is the same as a lead-out from the start line. The dog must remain on the table until you release him and you should be able to get ahead two, three, or even four obstacles. Remember to reward often for the proper behavior. For each sequence in **Figures 4 and 5**, leave the dog on the table and initially lead out just past obstacle #2. **Next** try leading out just past obstacle #3 and then past obstacle #4.



