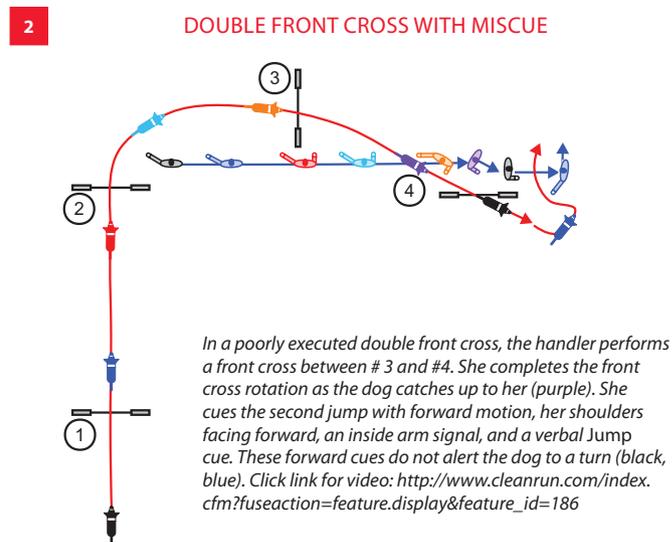
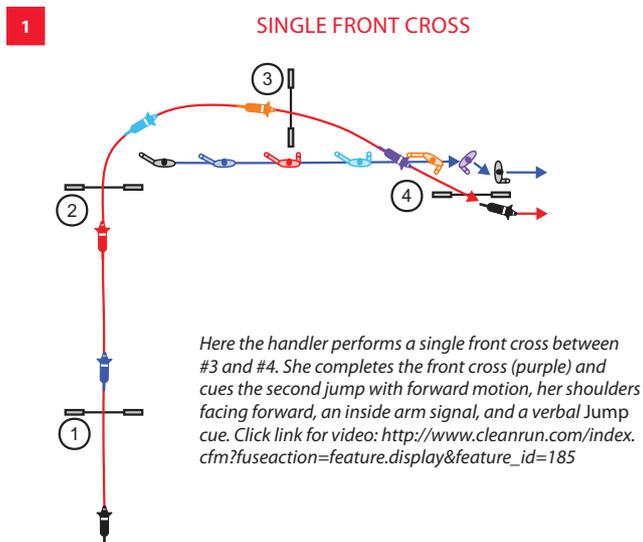


Combining Front Crosses By Linda Mecklenburg

A double front cross occurs when two front crosses are performed in succession, typically on the takeoff side of a jump followed by another on the landing side of the same jump. The sequence must be given thoughtful consideration when determining the most appropriate cue combination. Compared to a single front cross, a double front cross can be difficult to cue appropriately.

When two front crosses are performed in succession, the dog can easily be miscued on the second cross. Most often, just as the first cross is completed, the dog is catching up to the handler. As the handler moves to perform the second front cross, the jump is often cued with forward motion, shoulders facing forward, and an inside arm signal. These forward cues result in extension. Depending on the location of the next obstacle and/or the dog's size and stride length, extension is often inappropriate. See **Figures 1 and 2**.

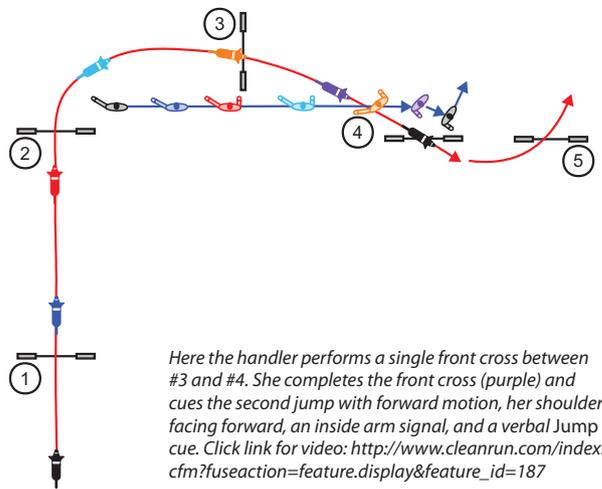


Videos Are Available for This Article: There are videos online that illustrate most of the diagrams. If you are reading the printed version of the magazine, go to this website, which will allow you to watch the videos sequentially: www.cleanrun.com/index.cfm?fuseaction=category.display&category_id=688 or <http://tinyurl.com/6ucy8ep>. If, however, you are reading the digital version of the magazine, you can simply click on the link in the figure caption to automatically go to the appropriate video.

This problem may be compounded if the handler attempts to move from the takeoff side of the jump to the landing side for the second front cross. See **Figures 3 and 4**. Handlers often attempt to avoid miscueing by under-rotating on their first front cross, so that their shoulders continue to face the dog as he approaches the jump. However, as the handler moves to perform the second front cross, the jump is now cued with backward motion, shoulders facing the dog, and an outside arm signal. This combination of cues may still result in extension because backward motion is a forward cue in this case. Depending on the location of the next obstacle and/or the dog's size and stride length, extension is often inappropriate. Excessive backward motion is not desirable because it restricts the handler's ability to move freely on the course. See **Figure 5**.

3

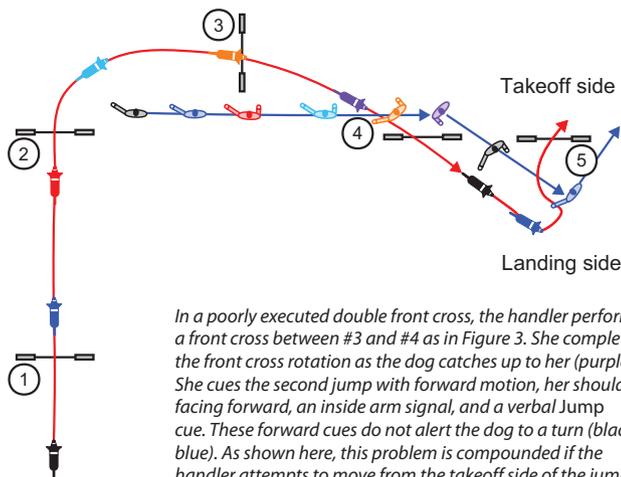
SINGLE FRONT CROSS



Here the handler performs a single front cross between #3 and #4. She completes the front cross (purple) and cues the second jump with forward motion, her shoulders facing forward, an inside arm signal, and a verbal Jump cue. Click link for video: http://www.cleanrun.com/index.cfm?fuseaction=feature.display&feature_id=187

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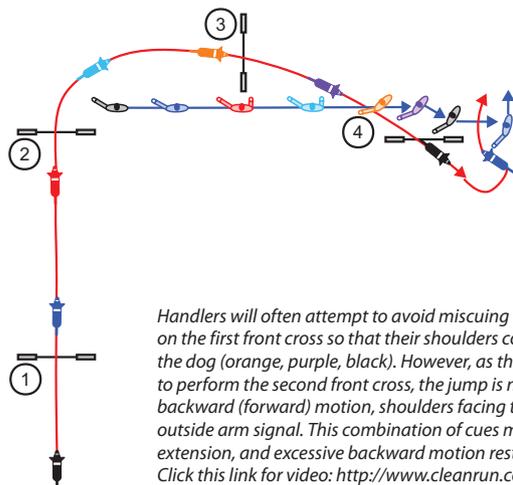
DOUBLE FRONT CROSS WITH MISCUE



In a poorly executed double front cross, the handler performs a front cross between #3 and #4 as in Figure 3. She completes the front cross rotation as the dog catches up to her (purple). She cues the second jump with forward motion, her shoulders facing forward, an inside arm signal, and a verbal Jump cue. These forward cues do not alert the dog to a turn (black, blue). As shown here, this problem is compounded if the handler attempts to move from the takeoff side of the jump to the landing side for the second front cross. Compare to Figure 2. Click link: http://www.cleanrun.com/index.cfm?fuseaction=feature.display&feature_id=188

5

DOUBLE FRONT CROSS WITH EXCESSIVE BACKWARD MOTION



Handlers will often attempt to avoid miscueing by under rotating on the first front cross so that their shoulders continue to face the dog (orange, purple, black). However, as the handler moves to perform the second front cross, the jump is now cued with backward (forward) motion, shoulders facing the dog, and an outside arm signal. This combination of cues may still result in extension, and excessive backward motion restricts the handler. Click this link for video: http://www.cleanrun.com/index.cfm?fuseaction=feature.display&feature_id=189

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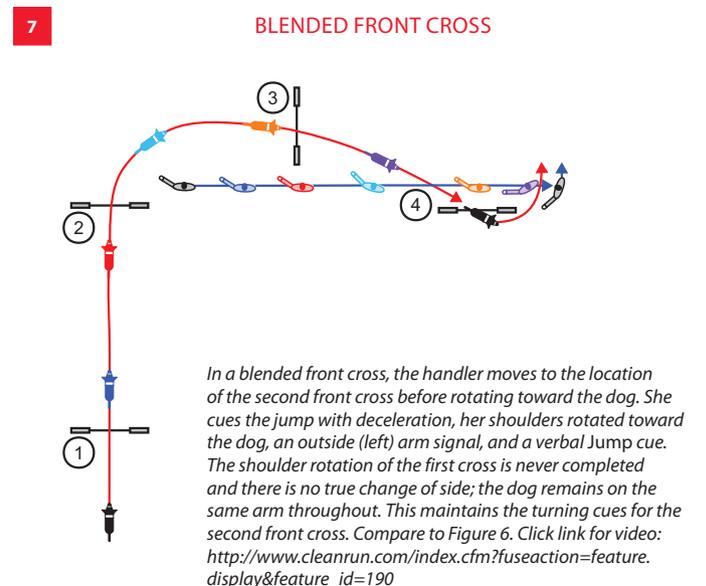
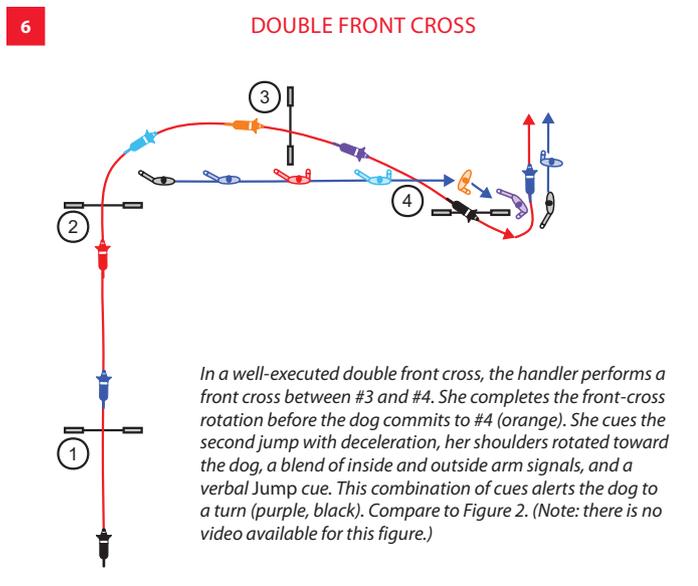


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With a shorter striding or slower dog (or a faster handler), it may be quite possible to perform two separate front crosses effectively. If the handler can stay ahead of the dog and cue both crosses appropriately and in a timely manner, a double front cross is often preferred. See **Figure 6**. With a longer striding or faster dog (or slower handler), it may be difficult to stay ahead and complete both front crosses in a timely manner as previously noted. If front crosses are the preferred strategy for the sequence, in almost all cases it is beneficial to perform the first front cross as close to the location of the second as possible. This helps prevent the dog from being miscued with forward cues on the second front cross. In some cases the efficiency of the first cross is slightly compromised, but the quality of the second cross will greatly improve as a result.

Depending on the configuration of the jumping sequence, the proximity of the two front crosses may result in the cues for both crosses blending together as one cue combination, rather than a separate cue combination for each cross. In a blended front cross, the handler moves to the location of the second front cross before rotating toward the dog. She cues the jump with deceleration (usually associated with one to two steps of backward motion), her shoulders rotated toward the dog, a blend of inside and outside arm signals and a verbal *Jump* cue. The shoulder rotation of the first cross is never completed and there is no true change of side; the dog remains on the same arm throughout. This maintains the turning cues for the second front cross. For slower dogs, these turning cues may not be ideal and a double front cross may be more appropriate. See **Figure 7**.



With a shorter striding or slower dog (or a faster handler), it may be quite possible to perform two separate front crosses effectively. If the handler can stay ahead of the dog and cue both crosses appropriately and in a timely manner, a double front cross is often preferred.



The blended front cross should not be used unless there is thoughtful planning and a logical rationale for using the cue combination. In many cases, alternate handling strategies may be more effective. A blended front cross is only infrequently

the strategy of choice, but determining when it is appropriate provides good practice for handlers that need to develop their skills for combining cues. See **Figures 8 and 9**.

8 **BLENDED FRONT CROSS**

In a blended front cross, the handler omits the front cross between #3 and #4. Instead, she moves to the location of the second front cross. She cues the second jump with backward motion (one to two steps only), her shoulders facing the dog, an outside (left) arm signal, and a verbal Jump cue. These cues alert the dog to a turn (purple, black). As shown here, it is more difficult if the handler must to move from the takeoff side of the jump to the landing side for the second front cross. Compare to Figure 6. Ideally placing the first front cross as close to the location of the second minimizes inappropriate motion. Compare to Figure 9. Click link for video: http://www.cleanrun.com/index.cfm?fuseaction=feature.display&feature_id=191

9 **ALTERNATE STRATEGY: PUSH**

This setup is the same as in Figure 8. Here the handler performs a push at jump #4. In some cases a push is a more appropriate strategy choice than a blended front cross. Click link for video: http://www.cleanrun.com/index.cfm?fuseaction=feature.display&feature_id=192

The handler's direction of motion relative to the obstacles should always be considered when determining whether or not to blend the cues of the two front crosses. Often, performing two separate front crosses is more appropriate than blending, if feasible. This is particularly true when the motion of the

blended front cross does not support the second jump. Dogs will learn to anticipate a blended front cross if the handler uses this cue combination frequently and thus get more and more responsive. See **Figures 10 through 17**.

10 **PUSH: INAPPROPRIATE FOR THE SETUP**

A push at #4 is less appropriate with this setup because the handler's motion supports jump A. Compare to Figure 9. (Note: there is no video available for this figure.)

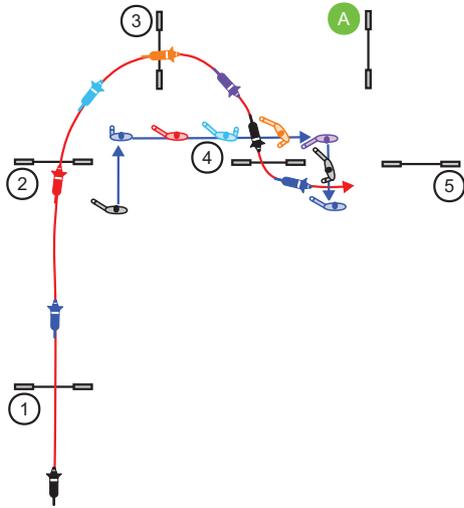
11 **BLENDED FRONT CROSS: INAPPROPRIATE FOR THE SETUP**

A blended front cross at #4 is also less appropriate with this setup because the handler's motion supports jump A. Compare to Figure 8. Click this link for video: http://www.cleanrun.com/index.cfm?fuseaction=feature.display&feature_id=193

While a blended front crosses is a useful handling strategy, it is only appropriate in selected situations and handlers should avoid overuse.

12

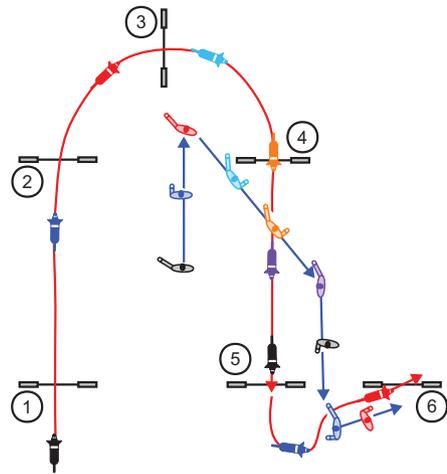
DOUBLE FRONT CROSS



This setup is the same as in Figures 10 and 11. Here a double front cross, with two separate front crosses (with true side changes), is more appropriate because of the use of turning cues associated with the first front cross (turquoise, orange). The turning cues alert the dog to the turn after #3. Click this link for video: http://www.cleanrun.com/index.cfm?fuseaction=feature.display&feature_id=194

13

DOUBLE FRONT CROSS WITH MISCUE



In a poorly executed double front cross, the handler performs a front cross between #4 and #5. She completes the front cross rotation as the dog catches up to her (purple). She cues the second jump with forward motion, her shoulders facing forward, an inside arm signal, and a verbal Jump cue. These forward cues do not alert the dog to a turn (black, blue). As shown here, this problem is compounded if the handler attempts to move from the takeoff side of the jump to the landing side for the second front cross. Click link for video: http://www.cleanrun.com/index.cfm?fuseaction=feature.display&feature_id=195

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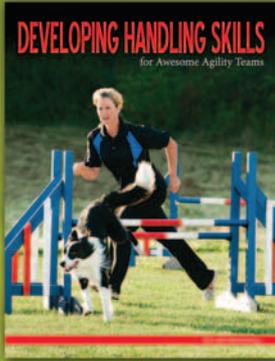





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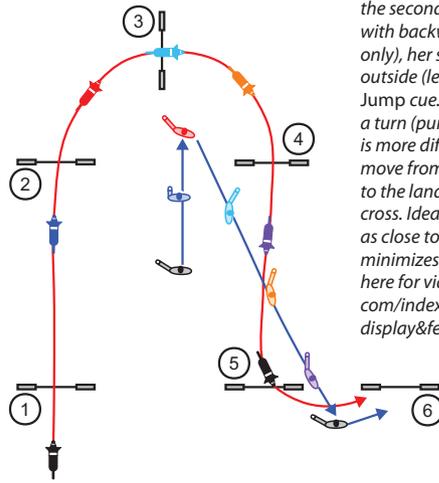
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14

BLENDED FRONT CROSS

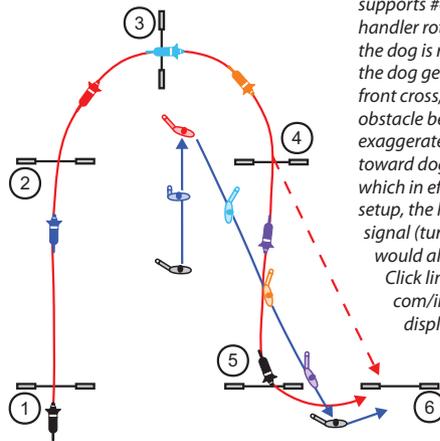
In a blended front cross, the handler omits the front cross between #4 and #5. Instead, she moves to the location of the second front cross. She cues jump #5 with backward motion (one to two steps only), her shoulders facing the dog, an outside (left) arm signal, and a verbal Jump cue. These cues alert the dog to a turn (purple, black). As shown here, it is more difficult if the handler must move from the takeoff side of the jump to the landing side for the second front cross. Ideally placing the first front cross as close to the location of the second minimizes inappropriate motion. Click here for video: http://www.cleanrun.com/index.cfm?fuseaction=feature.display&feature_id=196



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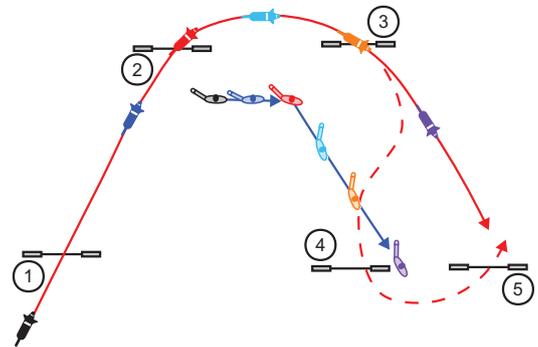
BLENDED FRONT CROSS: LEARNED COMPONENT

Although possibly the best strategic choice for this setup, a blended front cross is less appropriate because the handler's motion supports #6 (red dashed line). Until the handler rotates back and cues #5 (purple), the dog is reading cues that indicate #6. As the dog gets more familiar with the blended front cross, he will learn to anticipate the obstacle behind the handler based on the exaggerated side cues (shoulder rotation toward dog, inside arm, and eye contact), which in effect act as turning cues. In this setup, the handler could add a right arm signal (turquoise, orange, purple), which would alert the dog that it was not #6. Click link for video: http://www.cleanrun.com/index.cfm?fuseaction=feature.display&feature_id=197



16

BLENDED FRONT CROSS : HANDLER MOVEMENT SUPPORTS WRONG JUMP



A blended front cross is less appropriate with this setup because of the dog's angle of approach to #3 and the handler's motion which supports #5. Click link for video: http://www.cleanrun.com/index.cfm?fuseaction=feature.display&feature_id=198



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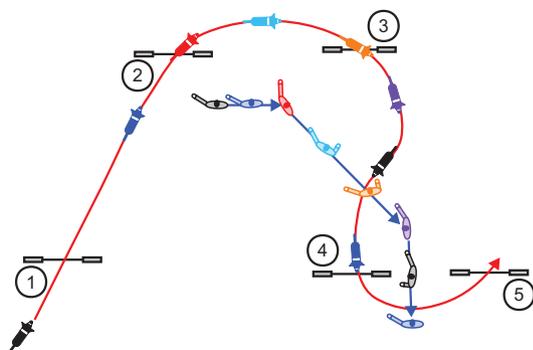
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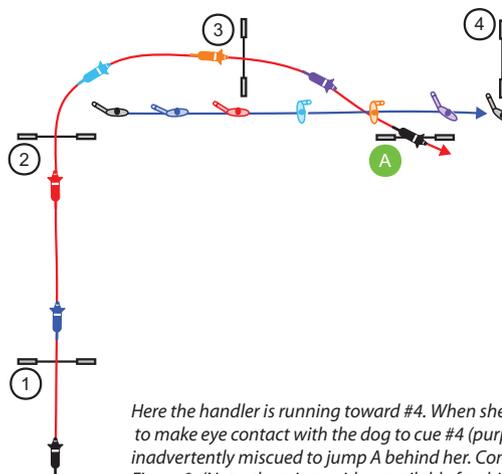
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DOUBLE FRONT CROSS



This setup is the same as in Figure 16. Here a double front cross with two separate front crosses (with true side changes), is more appropriate because of the turning cues associated with the first front cross (turquoise, orange, purple). The turning cues alert the dog to the turn after #3. Click here for video: http://www.cleanrun.com/index.cfm?fuseaction=feature.display&feature_id=199

BLENDED FRONT CROSS: POTENTIAL FALLOUT



Here the handler is running toward #4. When she turns to make eye contact with the dog to cue #4 (purple), the dog is inadvertently miscued to jump A behind her. Compare this to Figure 8. (Note: there is no video available for this figure.)

Sequences that call for a blended front cross occur infrequently. Overuse of the blended front cross may occur if the handler does not thoughtfully consider the most appropriate cue combination independently for each sequence. The most effective handling strategy for a given sequence may be overlooked in favor of a blended front cross if handlers fail to give careful consideration to their choices.

Any time a single cue combination is overused, there is potential for fallout. As mentioned previously, when the handler performs more blended front crosses the dog starts to look behind the handler for potential obstacles instead of ahead. This can be an advantage when indeed executing a blended front cross, but there is potential for fallout because the dog may begin to jump or take obstacles behind the handler that have not been cued. See **Figure 18**.

In closing, a double front cross occurs when two front crosses, complete with side changes are performed in succession. It can be difficult to cue both front crosses appropriately and in general it is best to perform the first as close to the location of the second as possible. When two front crosses are performed so close together that the cues appear to blend and no true side change occurs, it is a blended front cross. Each sequence should be carefully considered when deciding what the best cue combination will be for each individual dog. While the double and blended front crosses are useful handling strategies, they are only appropriate in selected cases and handlers should avoid overuse. 🐾

Linda teaches long-distance students via the internet and maintains an online discussion forum covering a wide range of agility related topics including handling, jumping, contacts, mental management, video and course analysis, international handling, and more! Go to <http://forums.awesomepaws.us> to join.