

## Editor's Page

### *Cooperation is Key*

It's 2 p.m. on Friday afternoon and today is the day that the Oprah Winfrey Show airs the Lisa Ling investigation into "the Hidden World of Puppy Mills." Here in California Oprah's show is on at 3 p.m. this afternoon, but since it has already aired elsewhere around the country excerpts and photos from the program are on the show's web site. If there's one person in the world who can bring much-needed attention to the horror of puppy mills in America, it's Oprah Winfrey. And if there's one place in the world where this kind of program will get attention it's definitely the BowTie offices, with dog and animal lovers wall-to-wall. All of our editors have already visited the show's web page to have a look at what the program is about.

My plan was to write again this month about the necessity for a more proactive and cooperative approach in helping AKC find solutions to the mounting issues that face fanciers and responsible breeders today. Reading Sue LeMieux's interview in this issue with AKC Director, veterinarian, breeder, owner and handler Patty Haines (which begins on page 88) and all this interest in the Oprah Winfrey Show coincided well with my original thoughts.

Anyone who watches television, listens to the radio or ever picks up a newspaper or magazine is aware that the climate related to animal welfare has changed greatly over the past decade, and our country's heightened interest in the subject can both help and hurt us as hobby breeders and purebred dog fanciers. Our greatest asset in the fight to help animals that suffer and to establish guidelines and laws that will be truly effective in protecting both the animals and the people who love them is the AKC. The American Kennel Club has the power and means to get things done, and we are their core constituency. People like Oprah Winfrey, of course, also have the power to get things done. From what I've seen so far of today's program it will go a long way in drawing attention to the horrible conditions in puppy mills across America and will make millions of people aware of the reasons why it's best not to buy a puppy from a pet store. At the same time, there are unfortunately always those people who paint all "breeders" with the same brush, whether it is a puppy miller operator, a backyard breeder, a commercial breeder with a gleaming facility that pumps out hundreds or thousands of puppies a week, or a responsible hobby breeder who produces one litter every year or two, like you or me.

That's the reason that we, as a collective body, have to get busy and come up with solutions to animal welfare concerns. Dr. Haines expressed well something that I figured out last year during California's fight against AB 1634: yes, as fanciers and breeders we need to fight bad dog legislation, but that doesn't mean that we fight all legislation that includes the word "dog." We have to be prepared to provide answers and solutions to these issues, not just opposition. We want those puppy mills that Oprah exposed on her program to be shut down. We want the Pomeranians that have lived their entire lives packed into makeshift cages on wire flooring outdoors to have better lives. We want the puppy mill owners who thin out their populations by shooting young, surplus male dogs and old, worn out females to be put out of business. It takes formal legislation, rules, guidelines, laws to accomplish those goals. It is up to the organizations and the individuals who are educated and experienced in these matters — that means us — to provide answers, solutions and guidelines for the issues that face this country in regard to animal welfare, and we must do that in a cooperative manner.

We'll explore this subject more in upcoming issues; in the meantime, keep yourself informed of new and existing legislative concerns by visiting [www.akc.org](http://www.akc.org), or better still, get involved with one of the organizations in your area that is working toward solutions to these concerns.

Christi McDonald, Editor