

## From the Editor

### Thinking outside the (whelping) box

*Allan Reznik*

Today's breeders seldom have the luxury of unlimited space or the ability to keep unlimited numbers of dogs. Faced with these realities, dedicated fanciers must become more resourceful than ever, keeping up with the scientific knowledge that's available and renewing the commitment to make every breeding count.

This issue offers a snapshot of the strategies conscientious breeders are using in the 21st century; the networking that's possible; the success stories as well as the frustrations that make the sport of dogs so endlessly challenging.

In "Walking the Tightrope" (page 30), Amy Fernandez explores breeding principles with the help of talented breeders such as Peter Belmont of Elmo Afghans and Dr. Claudia Orlandi of Topsfield Bassets. Along the way, Fernandez shares her own wisdom and experience. Having produced in excess of 100 champions under her Razzmatazz banner and authored the highly acclaimed *Dog Breeding as a Fine Art*, her input only makes a valuable article better. Fernandez reminds longtime breeders that often, a mentor's greatest contribution is helping a novice cultivate an eye for type, the ability to evaluate a dog's strengths and weaknesses while remaining mindful of the big picture. That's the cornerstone of every exceptional breeding decision and successful breeders never stop looking, learning and honing this skill.

Sue LeMieux profiles the top-producing sires and dams from Sporting Group to Herding Group in "Top of the Line" (page 36). It's fascinating to read how different breeders and owners embraced the new technology, or not. Some stud dogs whose semen was collected during their lifetime are still siring champions. Others have left us a memorable legacy, as have the great brood bitches of our time.

We're all familiar with the expression, "two heads are better than one." Well, two parent clubs, or three, or five, are better than one when it comes to spearheading medical research and collaborating with health organizations to address diseases affecting multiple breeds. Read "Body Politic" (page 42) by Matthew Schenker to find out more about what these dynamic interbreed partnerships are getting done and how you can become involved.

The dialogue continues in our columns. In "Breeder's Notebook" (page 14), D. Caroline Coile, Ph.D., looks at "Genetic risk assessment." As breeders, we make weighty decisions about our dogs all the time. One of the most stressful involves breeding dogs that are carriers of recessively inherited diseases. Coile recalls that back in the 1980s, the advice dispensed across the board was to eliminate an affected animal from the breeding pool, and stay away from its descendants too. That's good advice if the trait is dominantly inherited, but that strategy fails in the case of recessively inherited diseases.

Finally, you don't have to own Giant Schnauzers, or even compete in the Working Group, to have heard of Skansen Kennels. Established in 1951, more than 1,000 champions that have won more than 500 Best in Shows bear that prefix, making Sylvia Hammarstrom the most successful breeder of all time. This fascinating woman is the subject of Sue LeMieux's "Showstoppers" column (page 22). Hammarstrom is passionate, outspoken, well-read and remarkably modest about what she has accomplished. Get to know her better this month.