

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Dr. Gerard C. Penta

I would like to revisit my last column regarding the need for more match shows. I have been told that some years ago, the AKC tried requiring all clubs to hold a match show each year, but it did not work. It seems that in some parts of the country there are too many clubs in a given region with the result that they drew entries from one another. Consequently, with such small entries (some as low as 20-30) it was just not worth the effort and the AKC was persuaded to drop the requirement. Fast forward to the present and match shows are scarce or nonexistent in most parts of the country. Often, the ones that are held, are in the evening after a club's all-breed show, with little public awareness or participation. Hence, a powerful nationwide public relations weapon in the struggle for registrations, is lost. That loss is along with the loss of an economical system of training young dogs, new exhibitors, judges and the show committees of the future.

Here is yet another example of a penchant for tossing out an entire program, regardless of its value, simply because there are some legitimate problems with the current implementation of the program. I would not deny or make light of the difficulties associated with requiring match shows. They do take a great deal of time and effort. No doubt too many in a region would lead to the diminishing returns mentioned above.

Nonetheless, this does not negate the rationale for having sanctioned matches within reach of all current and **prospective** dog owners. Matches are so vital to our sport that the AKC ought to insure that there are at least regional matches held each year throughout the country.

One way to accomplish this would be to identify a group of kennel clubs as comprising a particular region and ask that they sponsor one or two large, well advertised matches in the region each year. Responsibility for staging the event could rotate among the clubs in the region, or, in the case of clubs with a very small core of workers, the match could be a cooperative activity.

I realize that this would require cooperation among these regional clubs which, in some cases, may be challenging to say the least. I am always a bit surprised when, after one club's show has ended, an entirely new panel of judges arrive for the next club's show at the same venue. Of course, if this panel change is really a reflection of an honest disagreement regarding the merits of the judges involved, then it is perfectly understandable. However, in some of these cases, clubs will hire the other club's panel in the next year or two. This leaves one to wonder if it is a lack of fiscal responsibility, or simply an unwillingness to cooperate with the other club. Either way it hurts a club's financial bottom line.

However, many clubs have learned that entries and net income can be increased by sharing show sites and judging panels. Also, two clubs holding four back-to-back all-breed shows seem to fare much better than those with a two show weekend. Conditions which lead to the approval of back-to-back shows, now favor the four show cluster, which attracts specialty shows, which leads to even more majors, which in turn draws larger entries. Clubs that can work together in this way strengthen both their financial condition as well as their reputations.

Of course venue and surrounding accommodations also play a major role in drawing entries. It seems that relatively speaking, those clubs that formed clusters and those clubs that moved to indoor air conditioned sites during hot weather did much better than those that did neither.

To return to my central point, namely, that clubs who are willing and able to cooperate with neighboring clubs can accomplish great things for both the sport and themselves. There is an old saying that comes to mind during these difficult times of economic constraints, declining registrations and attacks on purebred dogs, "If we don't hang together, we will hang alone."