

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Dr. Gerard C. Penta

The new Open Show is this sport's best hope of turning the tide which has been running against the dog show world for too many years now. The AKC is to be congratulated for this pilot program and deserves our full support in helping it succeed.

The program is well laid-out in the June issue of the *AKC Gazette* pages 93-95. While I agree with most of its provisions, I am concerned that a critical consideration has been overlooked which could hamper the efficacy of the program. I am referring to the difficulty some clubs may face due to the diminished size of their core work force and the aging of their membership. Of course, their condition is, at least in part, due to the demise of the match shows of bygone days. They stopped having matches because they simply could not hold them any longer. As competing local matches saw entries dwindle the time and effort to put on a match no longer seemed worthwhile. These clubs should now have the opportunity to participate in this Open Show program and reap the rewards this program has to offer. These rewards are many and far beyond those listed in the program. By drawing new people to the sport these small clubs may gain some new members which is the invigorating life blood of all kennel clubs.

I believe the solution to this problem for small clubs lies in the feasibility of joint Open Shows. A provision needs to be developed whereby a few small local clubs, perhaps below a certain minimum membership level, may be allowed to cooperate in the production of a large regional Open Show. The clubs would then share in all the work required to produce a successful show, as well as receive a proportional benefit from participating in the program. The Show Chairmanship should rotate among the local participating clubs as could the show site so that the regional Open Show is held in each club's locale at least once in a three or four year period. One large regional Open Show would surely be preferable to no local Open Shows in the region.

It is a great idea to e-mail an invitation to all eligible dogs in a 50 mile radius as mentioned in Robin Stansell's May 25 memo. However, in addition, it would be wise if an advertising plan were to be included in the application for an Open Show. We not only want current dog owners to attend, but prospective puppy buyers must also be made aware of the event. This is key to expanding AKC's base. Perhaps someone on the AKC Board could produce a brief flyer with helpful advice for clubs regarding effective advertising options at various budget levels.

The editorial in *Dog News* (April 29) was exactly right in pointing out that the Grand Champion program does nothing to expand AKC's constituency. It is, at best, a short term palliative to help clubs stop bleeding entries. This new Open Show program may be the long term cure our clubs and the sport so desperately need.

Hats off to the AKC on this very promising initiative.*