

I am sure everyone has been enjoying the new look, feel and voice of the Malamute Review. I do hope that this makes you want to contribute by sending in letters to the editor to voice your opinion, write your own articles about your thoughts and experiences or send in photos to show the world your treasured Malamutes. They are what this is all about: the AMCC, the Malamute Review and membership in the club. Please feel free to send us pictures, past and present, of your Mal Pals and stories, both happy and sad, of your life with them. Through this we all connect with one another, learn and help our own and all Malamutes and finally each other. Consider it.

The summer show circuits are up and running. I have missed a few already, but spring is bad for me as my students prepare for June final exams and I must get my marking and report cards all together in time for the end of the school year. This does not mean I am not coming out, it will just be later. I hope to see some of you soon and I wish all success in the ring with humility in victory and grace in defeat. Remember, you are going home with the best darn Mal in the world, your own.

The following is just something to consider ...

#### ON INBREEDING

The following is a conversation where the party's name, not my own, has been changed to protect the "innocent" (LOL), but I believe the topic discussed is worth sharing.

-----

Frank: XYZ, you're doing apples and oranges or fruits and vegetables or dogs and cats.....

*XYZ: I also do not want to touch the dog food issue, however I disagree that dogs and peoples life spans have much to do with each other,*

Frank: Sorry, XYZ, they have everything to do with each other - we are talking about the "domesticated dog" - domesticated by us and in most ways "created" by us and, therefore, inexorably linked to us.

*XYZ: People of today have vastly superior diagnostic and health services than historically, with more information on health maintenance than ever before....*

Frank: You say that "people have vastly superior diagnostic and health services than historically" and yet do not say that this is also true for the dog world (which it is). Dogs used to just fall over dead or go away and never come home - now we know what they died of in the minutest of detail - many are brought back to life as a result of this "superior diagnostic canid health service". Then you jump to that other issue - that of the gene pool.....

*XYZ: ...dogs however, and I am referring to all breeds, have been by nature of our imposed closed gene pools. have become more and more inbred, with such I believe has*

*occurred a increased risk of autoimmune diseases with a lessening of vigor,*

Frank: To me there is a BIG difference between careful inbreeding and BAD breeding. One of my first Mals was lost to Hemolytic Anemia (some 12 years ago now) - there wasn't a common ancestor anywhere in the pedigree. That's what I call BAD breeding - the breeder did NOT know what the male stud was bringing to the table, only much later did I find out the entire litter was plagued with sad stories (all died young to similarly "exotic" ailments) as was the reputation of the sire and so, too, the kennel he came from. He should never have been bred to. The shotgun approach to breeding does not work. That is only one example, but I suggest there are far more sad stories through BAD breeding than careful inbreeding.

The only way to have a "breed" is to inbreed, that's how they got started in the first place, people selectively choosing specimens to propagate certain characteristics, be it a ratter or a hunter of game or a chaser of fox. Just remember what it takes to create and "register" a new breed - certainty that "type" will be reproduced consistently and over many generations - there's only one way to do that. That's not necessarily a bad thing, that's where large kennels with many animals to choose from are an asset, you can keep and judge the results of breeding for strength of desired characteristics and maintain some degree of variation. But if everyone loses their mind and breeds to one "flavour of the month" and in close succession because it is fashionable to do so WITHOUT waiting and checking progeny for desirable and undesirable characteristics (in effect test breeding), OR does not do enough homework regarding the animals to be mated then you've got bad breeding and it takes a LOT of inbreeding (to say nothing of line breeding) of quality animals to finally come to a disastrous collapse, via disease or lack of vigor as you call it, whereas ONE bad "flavour of the month" can undo a lifetime of careful work. I am not at all convinced with your thinking that inbreeding/line breeding necessarily leads to loss of vigor, I know bad breeding certainly does. Out crossing can maintain vigor, but you can lose type if you are not careful, you can lose everything if you are indiscriminate and at a much faster rate than either line breeding or inbreeding.

*XYZ: I realize the HHHHHH dogs have historically been long lived. a testament both to good genes as well as good care, and I am not referring to them specifically but dogs in general are having more health issues today than in the past.*

Frank: Probably, but is that from bad breeding or line/inbreeding? Remember in order to maintain your breed you MUST inbreed (Mal to Mal, or Lab to Lab) - that is the definition of a breed type. With more people than ever involved with the breed the chances of bad breeding also increases for all kinds of reasons ranging from the just don't know any better, to the political, plain dumb or just indiscriminate, regardless of whether they were outcross, line bred or inbred and therefore creating the incidences you attempt to describe. Literally there are more dogs now, Mals in particular, than there ever was before.

Also, getting back to humans, if you are saying that people have fewer health problems today because of our "mongrel" heritage and present day tendencies of "out crossing"

then this would negate your hypothesis of "better diagnostics" as being a factor in human health - we should be better, not worse, regardless of the diagnostics. However, we seem to be suffering from many more ailments than my parents and their parents ever did - but that may be because we do have more diagnostics to pinpoint exactly what it is we suffer from - but that does not mean we have more or less than our forebears did - we only know more. People and animals used to just die. We don't accept that as a cause anymore. We all remember the odd relative that lived to some great age, we also remember the ones who died too young - everybody else just died. And so with our pet friends - we remember the long livers and the short - the average, however, gets lost in the memory and we use the extremes to unfairly justify what we believe, claim and do.