



by Amy Anderson & Bonnie Lane
co-chairs of WCA Breeders' Education Committee

Top Breeder Genetics

Barbara "BJ" Andrews

Two secrets to breeding over 200 top winning, top producing AKC champions; the dam and a newly discovered genetic "X" factor...

***"The strength of the sire is the power of the dam."* The genetic truth is in that one sentence. The dam of the litter is the foundation for all top breeders.**

Can becoming a successful dog breeder really be that easy? No. But you have to start with facts and a strong platform for your breeding program. If this were a textbook, it would lead you through step-by-step lessons designed to build layer upon layer of knowledge so that you would really understand the opening sentence. Student or Master, you need only to read that sentence again, then follow along here.

You could buy dozens of dogs and try all the fancy methods but unless you understand and apply that maxim, you would surely go back to knitting or whatever creative thing you enjoyed before you decided to become a dog breeder. You could study genetics until you were conversant with terms like genotype, phenotype, and homozygous. You'd be convinced that you knew all there is to know about breeding great dogs. A lot of good people get only that far but if you have gone on, you find them boring because they just throw around terms like they understood them.

Hopefully, you caught on to this: while a great male brings a breeder glory, it is the bitch that sustains a breeding program. *The strength of the sire is the power of the dam.*

I said that on our Akita "demo tape" during the eighties and some people said that it helped them realize where the magnificent O'BJ males actually came from. Once they had viewed legendary dogs like Sachmo, BigSon, and Widow-Maker, they replayed the tape and thought about the message. It was

subsequently repeated in my books and I'm flattered that it has been so widely quoted. Having judged Top Twenty at the 2010 Akita National, it was especially gratifying to see that a lot of great breeders really "got it"!!!

The problem for some is that the lesson seemed too simple, for others it was too much like work. For those who rely on statistical data; Bill and I are owner-handlers who don't "network," have no dogs at public stud and keep fewer than four breeding bitches, yet we've had over half of the Akita Hall Of Fame Producers including the #1 and #2 Sires and Dams. All of our Top Ten Producers broke existing show records and a few set new records which still stand today. The "power of the dam" has also enabled us to breed top winners and/or producers in three other breeds so it is not just a trite saying; we know where the power is and how to use it. You can do likewise.

So what's the secret? Well here it is. In the sixties, we noticed that most "dominant sires" (Dobermans, Rottweilers, etc.) produced greater numbers of outstanding bitches than they did sons. My mentor, Dorothy Gooch of Skyraider Dobermans, planted a seed that grew into a belief. The more I asked other breeders if these "genetic rules" applied in their breeds, the more convinced I became that it was indeed the dam of a great sire who passed on the most important breed characteristics. Taking it a step further, I observed that a stud was only as good as the bitches he served unless he was extremely dominant

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in which case, it was his daughters that would earn him a reputation as a great sire. Sachmo became the **Top Sire of all Working Breeds** having sired only 41 litters in his lifetime. *Three decades later*, thankfully, some correctly remember him for the long list of ROM bitches he sired rather than those 101 AKC Champions in the record books.

Now, through scientific advances of the nineties, aspiring breeders can really understand what “the strength of the sire” means. Now we may be able to prove much of what top breeders previously only “knew.”

Most people agree that the bitch has the greatest influence on a litter. The rationale has always been that it is she that nourishes and teaches the pups but we now have the technology to prove why she contributes so much to a breeding program.

I've always been fascinated by differences between dog breeders and livestock producers. The latter have exhaustive data on hardiness, weight, and reproductive ability (qualities not to be overlooked!) because cattle, pigs, chickens, etc. are an economic crop. Dairy farmers know how many gallons a heifer will produce at maturity based more on her mother or grandmother's record than on the herd sire. We who breed companion animals have had to muddle about without the economic incentives that spur great scientific advances.

The Breeder's Genetic X Factor

Now from the Thoroughbred Industry comes news of a genetic revelation. It is believed, and soon to be proven, that the female passes on intelligence and physical attributes through something called the “**X Factor**.” I was surprised to learn that the X chromosome is actually much larger than the Y (male) chromosome. Perhaps that is why it carries such a heavy genetic load! The female or X chromosome, is responsible for most of the highly desirable characteristics for which dog and horse

people strive. If a mare gets the magic double X, she is even more empowered to reliably produce outstanding progeny, including great sires. What we dog breeders have learned from each other, geneticists are finally confirming.

So knowing that, how does one reach the pinnacle of success in dogs? There are two roads. The shortest route is buying and campaigning a great male. The other is buying a great bitch and using her wisely. It depends on whether one wants instant or long term gratification. Both goals are equally important, especially when it takes a sizeable budget to mount a successful campaign. A person may have to choose which goal is most satisfying because rarely is a person able to do both nowadays. The sport is healthy because there are dedicated fanciers who present outstanding breed specimens created by the most talented of breeders. It is a wonderful partnership.

With all the gnashing of teeth about overpopulation, less is going to have to be more. If you have discovered that your forte' is study, nurturing, and creativity, then put your money and time into a great bitch that comes from a line of great bitches. She should become a ring star herself before being bred. You will have to think carefully if she is of a late maturing breed. The question of whether to breed her first or show her first is always a tough one.

But one thing is as certain as anything ever is when it comes to genetic formula, if she is from a line of powerful bitches, she'll surely give you males that not only win, but with a little luck and planning, they too can pass on her qualities to your next generation. That is why “The Strength Of The Sire Is The Power Of The Dam.” He had a powerful dam.

Aw shucks, we always knew that, we just needed the geneticists to confirm it.

http://www.thedogplace.org/Genetics/Top-Breeder_Andrews-02.asp