

**Before you breed, read this critical assessment from Pat Trotter,
Master Breeder of Norwegian Elkhounds.**

From the AKC Gazette, June 2007 issue "Better Breeding – Changing Criteria"

The first step in a good plan is to define the breeding goals.

Determine your ideal model, picturing it only with functional anatomy as well as correct and beautiful type. But don't stop there, because health, fitness and soundness of temperament as well as body are equally important. And breed character is *paramount*.

Next, one must evaluate the available breeding stock in the family, as well as the direction in which potential crosses with that existing stock may lead.

Furthermore, future potential matings for the resulting stock must also be part of the equation.

Unfortunately, the lament we hear from *master breeders* of many breeds is that there are no dogs to breed to because the available dogs fall far short of satisfying the ideal they seek. Breeders have always had to deal with this problem due to the many trade-offs inherent in the breeding process. Yet my discussions with many breeders have led me to believe that in a number of breeds this problem is more acute today than in the past. It is most perplexing to have an excellent, useful bitch and be unable to find the "right" dog for her.

Develop your own personal grading system to help you determine the worth of your stock. View dog shows as the arena where you can indeed measure the quality of your stock against that of others to determine how your breeding program is proceeding. Always keep in mind the numerous complex variables that determine judgment calls at dog shows: The best breeding stock may not always be the winner.

If you aren't yet the best judge of your own breeding stock, make it your business to become that best judge. Don't just go to a show for the win; go for the added knowledge that can benefit your breeding program. Let wise elders inspire you always to do the right thing in your decision-making, and make sure you understand that wisdom and kennel-blindness are not compatible.