My passion for clinical pathology was born out of my first career as a veterinary technician, during which I spent 15 years working with talented veterinarians in private practice. Although I enjoyed all aspects of my job, nothing made me happier than to come out of my in-clinic laboratory with hematology, biochemistry, or cytology results that helped to provide a diagnosis and appropriate treatment for one of our patients. Years later, having pursued a DVM degree, residency training and board certification in clinical pathology, as well as a PhD degree and research, I find myself in academia teaching veterinary students and thinking once again about private practice. There are so many diverse diagnostic tests available to private practitioners, and new technology is making it possible to perform more of those tests in the clinic setting. Therefore, I am particularly pleased to coedit, along with my friend and colleague, Dr. Jim Meinkoth, this issue of Veterinary Clinics of North America: Small Animal Practice dealing with clinical pathology and diagnostic techniques. We have been able to bring together a remarkable group of pathologists, immunologists, and internists to provide their expertise on a variety of subjects that we hope are of value to veterinarians in private practice. I am especially glad to include articles dealing with in-clinic hematology and clinical chemistry diagnostics, which are becoming increasingly popular as the technology becomes more affordable. In the realm of hematology, my personal fear is that veterinarians have forgotten the value of blood film evaluation instead of relying solely on numbers generated by automated analyzers.

I am indebted to all our contributing authors for their willingness to participate in this project and for their hard work preparing excellent articles, but I must give special thanks to Dr. Mary Anna Thrall. Dr. Thrall was not only
a mentor to me during my residency at Colorado State University but was my inspiration to give up my veterinary technician career and return to college and become a veterinary clinical pathologist. As I have told her on more than one occasion, “Mary Anna, this is all your fault!”

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Clinical pathology has fascinated me since I was a veterinary student, when I was taught by Drs. Ron Tyler and Rick Cowell. They shared with me the joy of being able to “solve the puzzle” and started me on this road, for which I remain in their debt. Now, after several years of being at the front of the classroom, I still find what I do as fresh and exciting as ever. I think clinical diagnostics appeals to the Sherlock Holmes in all of us, providing the clues to help us decipher what is happening inside the patient on the examination table.

It is an honor to be a part of the creation of another issue of the Veterinary Clinics of North America: Small Animal Practice devoted specifically to diagnostics. I am grateful to all the outstanding authors who contributed their time and expertise in producing excellent articles. I especially want to thank my friend, Dr. Robin Allison, for persuading me to participate in this little adventure. Because I am known to be somewhat “organizationally challenged” and “deadline deficient,” I would not have done this alone. She certainly did the lion’s share of the planning and oversight of this project and did it extremely well. Finally, I want to thank my wife Tina and son Phillip who put up with me not being able to say “no” to interesting projects that inevitably take some of my time away from them.

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