



APBC

ASSOCIATION OF PET
BEHAVIOUR COUNSELLORS

Association of Pet Behaviour Counsellors
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ADVICE SHEET 13

Your Dog and Your Baby



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Introduction

Pet owners should be aware that their baby will soon start crawling and toddling, and that it is important for them to remain vigilant once the child starts to move about of its own accord. It is especially important to provide the dog with a safe place to rest and relax, which is inaccessible to the toddler. This will avoid the situation where the dog is continually followed, cornered and pestered by the infant.



After the baby is born

First Introductions

When a new mum meets the pet dog for the first time after coming out of hospital, the dog is probably going to be very excited. The best way to carry out this first introduction will be when the dog is tired - after a long walk and play session. Firstly, the dog should be reunited with the mother when she is not with the baby, as the dog is likely to get excited and jump up at her. Later, the baby should be introduced in a quiet room where the dog has few associations - not in a place where the dog usually sleeps or eats.

Praise Your Dog

Associate the baby's presence with positive, enjoyable experiences for your pet. When your pet is behaving well around the baby, give lots of gentle praise and tasty titbits. The first interaction should be under control with the baby being held in the adult's arms and the dog allowed to sniff the child. The dog will appear interested for few seconds and will then lose interest. When he backs away you should praise

him and give him a treat. Carry on with the normal daily duties and routine and the dog should accept the new arrival readily. Pets will be very patient while you adapt to life with a new baby, so don't forget to include them.

Hygiene

People who do not have pets of their own may try and encourage you to rehome your pet due to hygiene. It is essential that your dog be treated for worms and fleas regularly, using products from your vet. Don't leave dirty nappies on the floor, as they can cause the dog to wet or mess on that spot. Nappies can also be appetising for certain dogs, so it is essential that any 'nappy bin' has a sealed lid and is emptied regularly. Use antibacterial soap to clean your hands after feeding, grooming, cleaning or playing with your dog.

Supervision

Do not place the baby on the floor with the dog and never leave your dog unsupervised with a baby, not even for a second. This includes all dogs, even

those with an excellent temperament. The use of a screen door for the baby's nursery allows you to keep the door shut, but still see and hear the baby.

How will your pet react?

If your pet has already experienced the arrival of a new baby, and has coped well, you should not have too many problems. However, if this is the first time your pet will be living with a new baby, then ask yourself the following questions:

- What sort of relationship will you have with your pet when the baby arrives?
- Once the baby comes, will you want to exclude your pet from certain areas of the house?
- Does your pet have any behavioural problems? If so, they may get worse once a baby has arrived. You should contact your vet for a referral to a pet behaviour counsellor if you need help. If you are happy with your pet's behaviour, then you can proceed with the general advice given in this leaflet.