



YOUR DOG & YOUR NEW BABY

When considering the safety of dogs being around babies, there are two critical times that pose the greatest threat of danger:

- ① *Initial Introduction / Infancy* - This can be a problem with predatory dogs. It is rare, but possible that a predatory dog will view a small, squirming, crying baby as wounded prey and will attack.
- ② *Toddler Age* - This can be a problem with dominant or fearful dogs. At this time the child is mobile and is at eye level with the dog. Direct eye contact can be perceived as a challenge to a dominant dog or as a threat to a fearful dog. It is also at this time that children begin poking and pulling at dogs and disturbing them while they are resting, eating, chewing a bone, etc.

Although it is impossible to predict how children and dogs will react to each other, there are some precautions you can take to try to create a harmonious relationship:

WHAT TO DO BEFORE THE BABY ARRIVES

(so your dog will not associate any changes in its life/routine with the baby's arrival)

- Change all routines as far in advance as possible (who will be the care giver to the dog - feeding, walking - once baby arrives, will feeding times/places change, get dog used to walking with you while you are pushing a stroller, etc.)
- Make all environmental changes as far in advance as possible (bringing new baby furniture into the house, restricting dog's access to nursery, restricting dog's access on furniture, etc.)
- Introduce new sounds and smells ahead of time (get dog used to smelling baby powder and baby lotion and associate that with good things like treats, get a tape recording of a baby crying and play that at various times of the day to desensitize the dog, etc.)
- Sharpen up on obedience training with daily sessions

WHAT TO DO AFTER THE BIRTH

(to create a safe introduction and a happy relationship)

- Bring home an item of the baby's from the hospital and let the dog smell it (use a blanket or item of clothing, not a diaper - disposable diapers can be very dangerous to dogs if ingested).
- When mom comes home from the hospital, she should go in the house first without the baby and greet the dog. Your dog will be very excited to see you as you have been gone for a while and you don't want to come in the door holding the baby and shooing the dog away. Dad or another family member should wait outside with the baby until the dog has settled down from greeting mom.
- Your dog should be placed on-leash and controlled by an adult while being introduced to the baby. This should be done in a very calm manner without a fuss. Your dog will most probably sniff and investigate the baby briefly and then go about his business. If the baby is crying when first brought in, don't introduce them at this time. Wait until the baby is calm and quiet before bringing the dog into the house.
- No matter how well your dog seems to have accepted your baby, **NEVER** allow a dog and a baby to be alone in a room together, not even for an instant. Always supervise any interactions - it is best if two adults are present when dog and child are together, one in charge of the baby and one in charge of the dog.
- Do not allow the baby to be on the floor with the dog. Do not allow the dog to be up on furniture with the baby. Dogs can lunge very quickly.
- *Do not ignore your dog when the baby is awake!* This is the most common and costly error made by new parents. If you ignore your dog or put him outside whenever the baby is awake and active, and then shower him with attention when the baby is asleep because you feel guilty for ignoring him earlier, you will create a situation where the dog will resent the baby. Although you see it as giving the dog more than enough attention, the dog will see that he gets the royal treatment when baby isn't around, and as soon as baby appears, the dog is dismissed. Your dog will come to hate the baby's presence. Instead, you should ignore your dog when the baby is asleep and give him attention, treats and playtime when the baby is awake. This way the dog will come to long for the baby's presence as this brings good things.
- Conduct obedience training with the baby in your arms so the baby will be associated with higher ranking.
- Be careful around feeding time. A baby who initially drops/throws food or hands food to the dog can create big problems later on when dog will think it is ok to run up and take food away from the child. It is best from the very beginning to teach your dog a "down/stay" across the room while baby is eating. Any food that drops on the floor is not to be eaten by the dog. Use a "leave it" command.

- As your child ages, be careful of his/her friends if you have a fearful dog. Although your dog may be quite comfortable around your child, rambunctious visitors can cause a lot of problems, especially if the dog feels it has no way to escape. Don't try to solve this problem by isolating your dog every time children visit - as this again will cause your dog to resent children. Supervise calm interaction between the visitors and the dog. After the dog has been greeted, petted, given some treats, you may then want to give him a "safe haven" to relax in while the children play (such as a crate or another room away from the kids). All visiting children must understand the dog is not to be disturbed while sleeping or while eating.
- Know your dog and monitor its behavior. Watch for signs of dominance (growling) or fear (running away or hiding). Any signs of aggression (growling or snarling) should not be taken lightly and serious thought should be given to finding the dog a new home - at least until the child is older. Do not wait for the first bite!