

Heather held her breath. The family cat, Swizzle, was meeting the new baby for the first time.

But Heather's preparation had paid off. Swizzle was dozing off next to Heather, already comfortable with the new baby on Heather's lap.



### MY PET HAS MET THE BABY, NOW WHAT?

Try to maintain regular routines as much as possible to help your pet adjust. And be sure you or another family member spends one-on-one quality time with your pet each day — it may help relax you too! In addition:

- Never leave the baby and your pet alone together, even after the baby is crawling or walking. This will protect your child from an exuberant pet and your pet from an enthusiastic child.
- Spend time with your pet and baby together, so your pet views the newcomer and the new relationship as a positive experience.
- To help keep a good routine for your dog, consider finding and hiring a part-time dog walker for at least the first few months after the baby has arrived.
- Don't assume allergy symptoms, if they arise, are caused by a pet. Many allergies are to other things like laundry detergents or new food. If your child shows symptoms of allergies, consult an allergist.



Talk about a persistent urban myth! The legend of a cat sucking away a baby's breath after the baby's been fed probably started in medieval times when cats were associated with superstition and witchcraft.

## PETS & BABIES

You can have a baby and keep your pet too!



You've had months to prepare for your new baby. Your pet cannot make the adjustment overnight. Prepare your pet before the new baby comes home.

Programs and services provided by the Ottawa Humane Society are made possible thanks to your financial support.

Please support the animals in our community.



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Ginger had been Rob and Susan's first "baby." Now that Susan was pregnant, they worried that their dog would not react well to the new baby. Rob wanted to get rid of Ginger, but Susan insisted they first try to make things work.

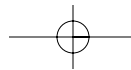
And they did! When the baby started crawling, Ginger was right behind him, watching over her new friend.



### WHAT IF I MUST GIVE UP MY PET?

Giving up an animal is never easy for the owner or the pet. Sometimes, despite your best efforts, your pet will simply not adjust. Consult your veterinarian to discuss new strategies. If that doesn't work and you feel your pet cannot get along with your baby, make sure the solution to your problem doesn't create a bigger one for your pet. Try to find a caring and responsible new home, or surrender your pet to the Ottawa Humane Society.

We will do our best to find your former companion the happy, healthy home she/he deserves.



Ottawa Humane Society  
www.ottawahumane.ca

## DOES GAINING A BABY MEAN LOSING A PET?

Every year in Ottawa hundreds of animals are surrendered to the Ottawa Humane Society when a new baby arrives. Myths and false information about cats and dogs frighten new parents into giving up their animal friend, who could be a warm and loving companion for a child.

With a few simple steps, you can ensure that your pet stays with you and your growing family.



## BEFORE YOUR BABY ARRIVES... CAN LIVING WITH A CAT CAUSE BIRTH DEFECTS?

Toxoplasmosis can cause serious birth defects. While the disease-causing parasite can be found in the feces of cats, it is more commonly found in uncooked or undercooked meat. Toxoplasmosis is uncommon in Canada, and transmission through the family cat is extremely rare. Have someone other than the pregnant woman clean the litter box. If the pregnant woman must clean the litter box, she should wear rubber gloves and a face mask, and thoroughly wash her hands afterward. She should also wear gloves while gardening to avoid coming into contact with feces from other outdoor cats, and thoroughly wash her hands afterward.

## HOW WILL MY PET REACT TO THE NEW BABY?

The addition of a new family member may be difficult for your pet. All animals react if their routine is disrupted, or they feel they have been displaced. So it's understandable that your pet may experience something akin to sibling rivalry when you introduce a new baby into your household.

You can minimize this feeling by working with your pet *before* you bring home your baby.



*Toxoplasmosis is serious. But the risk of transmission through a cat is very rare and can easily be avoided. Pregnant women should give up litter duty, not the cat!*



## HOW CAN I PREPARE MY PET FOR THE NEW BABY?

Gradually accustom your pet to spending less time with you. Avoid drastically decreasing attention *after* the baby comes home, which will likely make your pet feel stressed. If your pet is particularly attached to the mother-to-be, another family member should develop a closer relationship with the animal to ensure that the animal doesn't suddenly feel abandoned when the new baby arrives.

Below are several suggestions to make introducing your pet to your baby safer and smoother for all. Carry out these changes months before the baby's arrival to best prepare your pet.

- Sign up for a local seminar on Pets & Babies.
- Address any pet training and behaviour issues *before* the baby arrives.
- If your pet's behaviour includes gentle nibbling or pouncing, or swatting at you and others, redirect that behaviour to appropriate objects.
- Get your pet used to nail trims.
- Train your pet to remain calmly on the floor beside you until you invite him on your lap, which will soon cradle a newborn.
- Encourage friends with infants to visit your home to accustom your pet to babies. Supervise all pet and infant interactions.
- Accustom your pet to baby-related noises. For example, play recordings of a baby crying, turn on the mechanical infant swing, and use the rocking chair.
- Sprinkle baby powder or baby oil on your skin so your pet becomes familiar with the new smells.
- To discourage your pet from jumping on the baby's crib and changing table, apply double-stick tape to the furniture.

- If the baby's room will be off-limits to your pet, install a sturdy barrier such as a removable gate (available at pet or baby supply stores) or even a screen door. Your pet will see and hear what's happening in the room and feel less isolated.
- Before the baby arrives, get your dog used to going for a walk with a stroller. Also, use a baby doll to help your pet get used to the real thing. Carry around a swaddled baby doll, take the doll in the stroller when you walk your dog, and use the doll to get your pet used to routine baby activities.
- Talk to your pet about the baby, using the baby's name if you've selected one.
- Finally, plan ahead to make sure your pet is cared for while you're at the birthing center.

## HOW SHOULD I INTRODUCE MY PET TO THE BABY?

Before you bring your baby home from the hospital, have your partner or friend take home something with the baby's scent (such as a blanket) for your pet to investigate. When you return from the hospital, have someone else take the baby into another room while you give your pet a warm, but calm, welcome. After the initial greeting, bring your pet with you to sit next to the baby; reward your pet with treats for appropriate behaviour. Never force your pet to get near the baby; you want your pet to view his time with you and the baby as a positive experience.

