



From Our President By Lynn Erckmann

Sooner or later most of us will introduce a new dog into our families, either a foster or a permanent addition. If we have children and/or other dogs, there's much we can do to ensure that the introduction goes as smoothly as possible. This issue of SPEAKS has several articles with tips and suggestions for making these transitions successfully.

My own dogs take foster additions pretty much in stride now. The younger "play addict" welcomes all newcomers with hopes of adding a playmate, the old guy remains aloof, and the middle-aged female tries to manage all interactions. I find the dog most negatively affected by a new foster is the current foster dog, when I have two fosters. I think this is because the foster dog is not secure in his place in the hierarchy and has the most to lose with a new dog.

On an optimistic note, SPDR is now beginning its 15th year. Those of us who were starting to rescue our breeds back in 1987 had no way to predict how successful the little grassroots group would become. I want to thank everyone who volunteers in any capacity and encourage all of you to continue your commitment in 2001. Happy New Year!

Lynn

What to Expect from your Pet When You're Expecting

Excerpted from the book:
How To Get Your Dog To Do What You Want, by Warren Eckstein



Change means adjustment. Just by being with new and different people, a pet's personality can alter radically. However, with careful preparation, you can minimize the emotional upheaval and stress that are inherent in any family change. The therapy involved calls for close attention to behavior patterns, immediate diagnosis, and treatment of any new personality quirks.

With a phenomenal number of couples today postponing childbirth so that each can establish a career, a pet naturally becomes the kid in the household. He's loved and pampered, he's

treated to special occasions and gifts, and he fulfills the couple's psychological need for nurturing.

But inevitably, things change.

The couple begins to prepare for the birth of a child and family life. What happens to the pet in this situation?

Like the first child, confused and perhaps angry about the arrival of his new brother or sister, the pet may feel insecure, neglected and depressed, and he may exhibit all kinds of attention-getting signals in an attempt to win back his owners' love and affection.

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An animal needs a lot of preparation for the new arrival—almost as much as the parents need. If your dog doesn't see babies on a regular basis, the sound, sight and smell of them can be very distressing.

As soon as a couple knows about a pregnancy, they should begin desensitizing their dog to infants. This will save a lot of work later on, when the baby arrives, and can prevent many potentially dangerous situations.

The Infant Preparation Program

1. Physical Objects

As far in advance as possible, try to collect everything you will need for the new arrival. This way, the pet will have time to adjust gradually to the new items and won't have to deal with them and the new baby all at the same time (for those who are superstitious about purchasing baby items or bringing them home too early, you might ask a close friend or neighbor to keep them for you. Better still, conquer your superstition.)

2. New Smells

For smell and orientation,



you will need the crib, changing table, bassinet, baby bath, dirty diapers, and baby oil and powder. Since the powder is irritating to some animals, start by sprinkling a little on the floor so your pet can get used to it. You can't buy dirty diapers, of course, but you can douse some disposable diapers with a solution of ammonia and water to simulate the smell of urine—which will, of course, arrive with the baby.

Some dogs and cats have housebreaking regressions when they see that the newcomer is allowed to mess in the house. You can eliminate this problem by having the scent around early on and being vigilant about regular times for walks.

3. New Sounds

For sound desensitization, you will need a tape recording of a baby crying.

This will minimize the pet's curiosity or fear when he hears the real thing. Play the tape at increasingly high volumes over a period of weeks. A dog may mistake a baby's cry for that of a cat, and if he dislikes cats, the

baby could stimulate a negative association for him. By using tapes, you can desensitize the pet before the baby arrives.

4. New Habits

Both parents should participate in accustoming the pet to the baby's arrival. You will also need rattles, mobiles, stuffed animals, and a doll you can hold—preferably the kind that wets and cries. Place the doll in the bassinet and show it to the dog or cat. Then pick up the doll and hold it as you would hold a child. Finally, pick it up and hold it lovingly while the mechanical doll cries or while you play the tape of a baby crying. Don't push away the pet; let him gently investigate the bundle in your arms. Try to behave the same way when the baby comes home. If you pull away the infant when the pet is trying to get close, it will indicate to him that something is wrong. The doll can accustom you both to the process. When your pet understands that he is not allowed to jump on the precious bundle you're holding, he's on the road toward learning to respect the baby. Naturally, some readjustment will be necessary after the birth, but this purchase can save a lot of steps in between.

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5. Health and Cleanliness

Several months before the baby is due, have your pet checked thoroughly by the vet. If the vet sees your pet regularly then he should have all his booster shots and should be checked for both internal and external parasites. If the pet hasn't seen by the vet in the past twelve months, then have a check-up immediately and again before the due date. Be sure to clip his nails regularly so they won't scratch the baby, and remember to bathe and brush him well just before the due date.

6. Pet Sitter

Before the trip to the hospital, be sure to make arrangements for the care of your pet. Since you may both be away for the house for twenty-four hours or more, you'll need to have someone come in for walks and feedings. If you cannot make these arrangements, have a friend take the pet home with him until you are back to your normal schedule. You'll both be going through a good deal of stress throughout labor and birth, and a helper at home can eliminate some of the trauma that both you and your pet may experience. Choose someone who is a friend of the dog or cat, and who has fed and walked him previously. It should also be someone who doesn't mind being awakened at 3 a.m. - in the event that is the time when you're ready to

go to the hospital and will be telling him his custodianship has begun.

7. First Greeting

When you arrive home from the hospital, make sure the husband carries your new child into the house. The wife, who may have been away for a number of days, should walk in first and greet the pet enthusiastically. If the wife carries the baby, she will pull away instinctively when the pet



jumps up to greet her, indicating to the dog or cat that something is wrong. The pet may also blame her absence on the bundle in her arms, and could resent the newcomer from the outset. After the big greeting is over, the baby can be brought into the house.

8. Presents for Everyone

Keep a closet full of pet toys, treats and bones ready for after the birth. People will be coming in droves to give your baby presents, so it's only fair to have something ready for your eager pet - in the past, the first one welcomed at the door by any

visitor. If he suddenly is shunted aside, he will feel unwanted and neglected. Encourage your guests to give him some special attention before they go in to see the new arrival, and there will be much less jealousy between child and pet later.

9. Shared Duties

As you both establish a new routine of feeding, sleeping, and grabbing a few leisure minutes when you can, be sure you alternate the time you spend with the pet. Even though the wife's primary function in your household may be childcare, it's important for her to alternate walks and pet feeding with the husband. Particularly if the wife has been the primary companion of the dog or cat, it's vital that she not drop out of the picture. Both owners should continue trading off these tasks, even after the baby has arrived.

10. Separation for Safety

Never leave a baby and a pet alone together—for *any period of time*—regardless of how well they seem to be getting along. Your pet may ignore the baby, but, on the other hand, he may be extremely curious. Without meaning to, he could jump on the child or tip over the bassinet, or rake a paw over a very tender face. I certainly am not suggesting that you separate your child and your pet —

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that is the worst thing you can do, because it may engender instant hostility — but you should always supervise and be conservatively cautious.

Never give an accident a chance to happen. Use a pet gate if your dog won't jump one, or else be scrupulous about keeping the animal out of the room when you're not there. When you're finished with your middle-of-the-night feeding and are still half-asleep (or, more likely, when you're completely asleep and working on automatic pilot), be very careful that all pets are out before you leave the room.

As long as your vet has given your pet a clean bill of health, don't worry about animal contact. A little fur and a few pet kisses are not going to hurt your baby — as long as you are always around to supervise.

11. Feeding Schedules

If there seems to be competition over food, or if the pet seems unnecessarily upset every time you nurse, you might consider changing the pet from two regular feedings to several smaller ones. This way, one of you can dish out



a little pet food while the other feeds the baby — and everyone will be happy.

12. Playtime

Remember that a child and a pet play together like two young animals, so there will be more mouthing, nipping and chasing with a toddler than there is with an adult. Don't ever overreact and scream at the pet for doing something that you think is threatening. If it bothers you, use your control commands and stop the play, showing both pet and child how to touch and stroke each other gently. Also, don't yell when your delighted dog picks up all the food your toddler has dropped on his way across the living room. If you scream at the pet for the infraction, he'll come to blame the child for his punishment, and this could set up a lot of hostility between them. This is the nature of things — babies drop food and pets eat it. Look at it this way... it means less vacuuming.

13. Equal Attention

Finally, never forget that the change in your family shouldn't mean a change in the way you behave toward your pet. He still needs family time and separate time with each of you. It's easy to ignore a beloved cat or dog when you're ecstatic over the birth of a child. It's easy to assume that the pet can fend for himself. But this isn't so. He should be viewed as another sibling — one who deserves the care and consideration he's always received.

If you follow this simple program, you should have a pleasant and stress-free transition from couple life to family life. Your goal, of course, is to have your pet love the baby and want to protect it as much as he does both of you. As long as you're aware of the pet's needs and provide for them in advance, you should have very little trouble when your infant arrives.



About the Author:

Warren Eckstein is an internationally known pet and animal expert., who adopted his German Shepherd "Rio" through SPDR. Find his biography on: <http://www.annonline.com/interviews/>

So many pets, so little time to answer your questions! That's why now Warren Eckstein is hosting weekly pet chats on his new site: warreneckstein.com. This lively half-hour focuses on interactive help with all your everyday pet problems. Warren will answer your questions, offer advice, and make you smile!

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