

## POINTS TO PAWNDER SERIES

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### New Babies & Pets: Finding Harmony

Every year, thousands of people get rid of their pets when they have a baby. Sadly, myths and misinformation frighten parents into believing babies and pets don't mix. In fact, babies and pets can mix, if you take just a few, simple steps to help your pet accept your new baby. Here are some simple things you can do to create harmony between your baby and the beloved family pet.

#### Before You Give Birth

##### Acquaint Your Pet With Household Changes

- Allow your pet to check out new changes in the household, like the new car seat, the new nursery, the baby's toys and clothes. Naturally, this should be done with your supervision, so your pet doesn't choke on the baby's toys or otherwise hurt herself.

##### Help Your Pet Become Familiar With Children



- Let your pet spend time around your friends' children, with your close supervision.
- Play a recording of a baby's cries for your pet to help your pet become used to the sound. You can purchase a Preparing Fido™ CD that contains a collection of baby sounds to help prepare your pet for the new arrival at: <http://preparingfido.com/>
- Put baby products you intend to use (e.g., powder, oil, lotion) on your arm so your pet becomes familiar with the new smells.

##### Treat Your Pet To An Obedience Course

- Start basic training your pet now, to discourage him from jumping onto places that will be off-limits when the baby arrives, and to help your pet be as well-socialized as possible.
- If your pet hasn't been through a basic 6 week obedience course, now is the time to consider such a course. They are reasonably priced, fun, and could mean the difference between being able to keep your pet or having to give your pet up and put her at risk for euthanasia.
- See Indiana-PAW's website, [www.indiana-paw.com](http://www.indiana-paw.com), for obedience course resources.

##### Have Your Pet Spayed Or Neutered

- Make sure your pet is spayed/neutered, as they will be calmer and less likely to exhibit signs of aggression once your baby arrives.
- In addition to the behavior benefits of spay/neuter surgery, this surgery will

also help your pet lead a longer, healthier life and reduce their risk for many cancers and health problems.

### After You Have Your Baby

#### Lay Groundwork Before Introducing Your Pet To Your Baby

- Have a family member carry your baby into your home when you return from the hospital, so that you can greet your pet warmly and reassuringly.
- Familiarize your pet with the smell of your baby (e.g., by letting your pet smell blankets the baby used at the hospital) before you introduce the pet and baby.

#### Familiarize Your Pet With Your Baby

- Spend time with your pet and your baby together.
- Reward your pet for good behavior with the baby.
- Reassure your pet that he's still a part of your life.
- While you hold your baby, smile at your pet and use your pet's name.
- Make time with the baby a pleasant time for your pet as well.

#### Keep A Routine For Your Pet

- Routine is important for pets, and adds to their feeling of safety and stability.
- Feed your pet at the same time each day, and take them outside to go to the bathroom at the same times each day.

#### Keep Your Pet Out Of Your Baby's Room

- Keep your pet out of your baby's room to avoid an accident caused by an exuberant pet or child acting mischievously towards the pet.
- Put up a screen door or sturdy baby gate, so your pet can still see, smell and hear all the action, and won't feel confused and resentful of the baby.

#### Don't Make Assumptions Regarding Allergies

- Many suspected allergies to pets are really allergies to other things (like laundry detergents or new foods), so if your child shows symptoms of allergies, consult an allergist for advice. Don't rush to give up your pet!

#### Suggested Reading

- The Humane Society of the United States, "Introducing Your Pet & New Baby," [http://www.hsus.org/pets/pet\\_care/introducing\\_your\\_pet\\_and\\_new\\_baby.html](http://www.hsus.org/pets/pet_care/introducing_your_pet_and_new_baby.html)
- Ottawa Humane Society, "New Babies And Pets Do Mix," <http://www.ottawahumane.ca/babies.html>
- Parenthood.com, "Quick Tips For Introducing Your Pet To The New Baby," [http://parenthood.com/articles.html?article\\_id=4685](http://parenthood.com/articles.html?article_id=4685)

**Important Note:** Indiana-PAW's POINTS TO PAWNDER SERIES is intended to provide quick tips to help citizens address common pet health and behavior questions. It is not intended to replace consultation with one's veterinarian and/or a trained behavior specialist.