

Pets and Babies



Many babies come home from the hospital to one or more curious pets. Most cats and dogs accept this new member of the family with no problem. However, careful preparation ahead of time can prevent undue stress on your entire family, including your companion animal(s).

BEFORE BABY ARRIVES

- Make sure vaccinations and health care are up-to-date
- Give your pets attention and play daily – exercise will keep your dog/cat relaxed
- Discuss questions with your vet, local animal shelter, or rescue group
- If your pet is a dog, take a training course to review basic commands and gain ideas for fun play
- Invite friends to bring their babies and children to your home to help your pet become comfortable around little people
- Start using baby lotion, powder, and soap yourself so that baby will smell familiar to your dog/cat
- Set up baby's room as soon as possible so your animals will have time to accept the new arrangement
- Consider installing a screen door in baby's doorway – your animal can still see, hear and smell baby and you, but will not have access to baby's room

WHEN BABY COMES HOME



- While someone else holds the baby, mom should greet the animals
- Offer one of baby's extra blankets to the animals to smell
- Keep your dog on a loose lead, short enough that he can't reach the baby (at least six feet away)
- Remain standing until the dog has had a chance to smell and listen to the baby
- If your dog is curious let him see the baby, maintaining the six foot distance
- Tell your dog to "sit" or "lay down" before the person holding the baby sits
- Reward your pet(s) with praise if there is no fear or aggression shown
- Always use caution, proceed slowly

LIFE WITH BABY

- Keep your home routines as much the same as you can
- Watch your pet(s) for signs of stress, depression, behavior changes – consult your vet for anything unusual
- Teach your animal not to beg for baby's food
- Never give your dog a doll to play with that looks like a baby
- Restrict rough play to areas that are off-limits to the baby
- Instruct babysitters to keep baby and animals apart while you are gone
- Remember to practice your dog's commands everyday
- Teach your children to be kind to animals
- Remember, never leave your children and pets alone together without supervision

www.oakgov.com/health



The Oakland County Health Division will not deny participation in its programs based on race, sex, religion, national origin, age or disability. State and federal eligibility requirements apply for certain programs.