

Preparing Your Pet For Your Baby's Arrival

(NAPSA)—Bringing a baby into the family can be a life-changing event for your pet as well as for you and your spouse. Fortunately, there are several simple things pet owners can do before the baby arrives that can help to prepare your pet and you for the changes that are about to occur. For example:

- Take your pet to the vet for a routine health exam and vaccinations. This is important, since pets can expose infants—and even older children—to fleas, hookworms and other internal parasites.

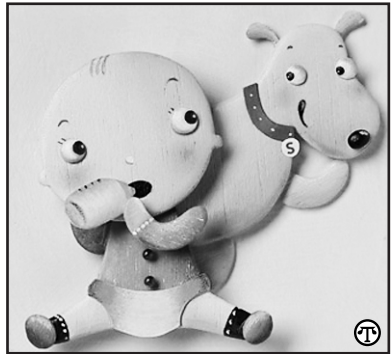
- Do your research and identify expert resources that you can use as you enter into this new phase of family life. For example, the Web site www.growingupwithpets.com offers a wide range of tips on different aspects of caring for a pet while becoming a parent.

- You may want to spay or neuter your pet. Sterilized pets typically have fewer health problems and are calmer and less likely to bite.

- Address any pet training or behavior problems. If your pet exhibits fear and anxiety, now is the time to consult an animal behaviorist.

- Train your pet to remain calm on the floor beside you until you invite him on your lap, which will soon cradle a newborn.

- If your pet has any type of behavior problem, consider enrolling in a training class with your dog. Training allows you to safely and humanely control your dog's behavior and enhances the bond between you and your pet.



Be sure to take your pet to the vet for a routine health exam and vaccinations before your newborn arrives.

- Encourage your friends with infants to visit your home to accustom your pet to the sounds and smells of a baby.

- Play recordings of a baby crying, turn on the mechanical swing and use the rocking chair—anything to accustom your pet to baby-related noises. Make these positive experiences by offering your pet a treat or playtime.

- Once you have the nursery set up, allow your pet to inspect it. Install a sturdy, removable gate that your pet can see through. Allowing the pet to see and hear what's happening in the room will make him feel less isolated from the family.

Before the new baby arrives, allow your pet to sniff around the nursery. Begin introducing scents such as baby powder and baby lotion by putting these products on yourself or the baby doll.

For other useful tips on pets and family life, visit the Web site at www.growingupwithpets.com.