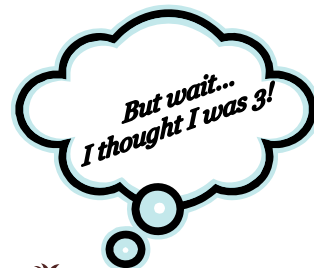


And Baby Makes 3



Baby's homecoming should be a joyous event for everyone in the family. But unfortunately, the pitter-patter of little feet - not to mention the crying, chaotic schedules, and cranky parents that follow close on their heels - strikes fear in the heart of many a brave dog. Too many dogs lose their homes when, in a sleep-deprived haze their families decide that something has to give. But you don't have to make such a heart-breaking decision if, while you plan for Timmy's arrival, you help Lassie get ready too. Here are some important things to consider:



First and foremost, brush up on your dog's skills: make sure his Stay stays put and his Come comes running the **first** time you say each cue. Make sure your dog responds to verbal cues so that when your hands are full he can understand your directions, but also remember to practice the hand signals so he can be successful when baby's sleeping, too. **And if your dog has ever, ever shown aggression or even discomfort towards humans of any age, consult a professional dog trainer or behaviorist now - before bringing up Baby takes precedence over training the family dog.**



Babies bring all manner of new sights and sounds and smells with them when they arrive. Some of these stimuli will excite your dog, some will intrigue or possibly annoy him, and some may scare his little furry pants off! But all these things are a natural part of babyhood, and as such, they are not going to go away anytime soon. Help your dog learn to associate all things Baby with **good things for him**, rather than with chaos and change. Buy baby sounds CDs and make them the soundtrack to your daily routine: begin with the volume adjusted low so the sounds are just barely audible, and as everyone in the family becomes accustomed to the noise, begin increasing it until you reach the ear-splitting levels of real life. Also, as you begin setting up the baby furniture, introduce your dog to it in ways that teach him appropriate behaviors to practice once it is occupied by your little bundle of joy. And reward him for picking up toys or items that smell like him while directing his interest away from Baby's things - but: remember dogs will always do what's most rewarding to them at the time, so practice good housekeeping, too!

Teach your dog to enjoy a little “heavy petting” so that he remains comfortable when chubby hands pull and poke and pat. Firmly stroke his fur while offering him some tasty chicken. Gently tug on his ear while he munches on bacon. Let him slurp peanut butter off your palm while pull his tail this way and that. At the same time, teach your child gentle touches to share as he grows up alongside his new best friend.



Schedule changes confuse and disturb many dogs, so begin living your schedule as though Baby were home several weeks in advance of his arrival. Buy or borrow an appropriately sized baby-doll and practice feeding, changing diapers, and playtime so that your dog knows what you expect of him in each of these situations. Get up in the night, turn on the lights, and rattle around in the kitchen if you will be preparing bottles so that your dog doesn't mistake you for an intruder. And think about how you will prepare your dog (and Baby, too) for your eventual return to work if that is part of your plan.

And finally, when Mom comes home from the hospital, have someone else carry the two-legged baby so she can properly greet her four-legged one! If she has had a difficult delivery, or if she has had surgery, leash Fido so Mom can enter safely and sit down before saying hello. And never, ever punish your dog around your child: your dog should see your child as just another wonderful human in his life; but if he receives punishment every time the little nipper comes out to play, he may become a little nipper (or, rather, biter) himself.

