Pets and Your New Baby

With a little care and common sense, you can help build a good relationship between your new baby and the family pet. Problems are most likely to happen with pets who were treated as “the child” before your baby arrived. Introducing a new baby to this pampered pet may bring out problems as intense as sibling rivalry.

Help your pet adapt to the new arrival

- Before baby comes home, allow your pet to sniff a blanket or piece of clothing worn by baby in the hospital.
- When bringing baby home, greet your pet first, without the baby; spend a few minutes together, then allow your pet a get-acquainted sniff of baby.
- After they have met, allow your pet to snuggle next to you during feeding and holding time, like you would an older child.
- Keep your pet away from baby at night or when baby is sleeping.
- Do not leave your pet alone with baby, no matter how gentle you think your pet is.
- Follow the same routines for feeding, bathing and play time with your pet.
- Play with your pet in baby’s presence; the pet will associate baby with love and fun.

Keep the environment healthy and safe for baby

- Keep your pet’s medical care and immunizations up to date.
- Discuss de-worming and flea treatment for your pet with your veterinarian.
- Wash your hands after playing with your pet and before picking up baby.

Unexpected behaviors

A jealous pet usually shows his or her feelings with aggressive behaviors. Keep in mind that pets who react in these ways usually adjust to baby in a short time. Some examples:

- Your dog may dig holes in the yard.
- Your pet may sulk or chew on furniture.
- Your cat may forget to use the litter box.
- Your pet may show changes in its temperament.

These suggestions apply to dogs and cats.
If you have other animals, please speak to your veterinarian.