



HUMANE SOCIETY

of Sonoma County

COMMITTED TO KINDNESS

Preparing Dogs for a New Baby

Preparing to bring a new baby home can be both exciting and scary! There are so many things to get ready – including the family dog. So how can you best prepare Fido for the arrival of a tiny new human? Here are some tips:

- **Brush up on basics.** Making sure your dog remembers how to respond to essential cues like sit, down, stay, and being able to send him to his bed, will make things much smoother once Junior arrives. Think about how those cues look to your dog, and how changes during and after pregnancy could affect that picture. For example, if your dog is used to being sent to his bed with you standing near the bed, will you be able to ask him to lay in his bed while you are sitting with a baby in your arms? The more you prepare for these specific scenarios, the easier it'll be when the time comes.
- **Set up success stations ahead of time.** Setting up areas where a dog is safely managed and contained is pivotal for the early stages of childhood. We don't want to surprise our dogs with baby gates, crates, and tethers, but rather to gradually introduce these management tools in a positive way. If Fido learns ahead of time that going to his success station means a delicious stuffed Kong to work on, he'll be happy to cooperate and give you some space when you need it most.
- **Make a plan for your pooch before you go into labor.** Plan ahead of time where your dog will be or who will care for her when you will be delivering the baby. Even if you plan on laboring at home, it's a good idea for your pup to have somewhere familiar to hang out so that she is not stressed by the strange sights and sounds of labor.
- **Make a homecoming plan.** Homecoming should be as low-key as possible. Instead of creating a lot of fuss and excitement about the new baby, set up a plan where each parent can greet the dog without baby initially, and wait until the dog is calm and relaxed to invite her into the room where the baby is. We want to foster relaxed co-existence, not excitement and interaction, so a great start is to have your dog laying quietly on her bed while mom and dad sit nearby with the baby. You do not need to bring the baby up close for the dog to inspect.