



Navarro Small Animal Clinic

5009 Country Club Dr. Victoria, TX 77904 361-573-2491

www.navarrosmallanimalclinic.com

Dogs and Children

By: Dr. Shana Bohac

Bringing a new baby home is a fun, exciting, and somewhat scary experience. There are so many things to buy and think about to baby proof your home and prepare for all the upcoming changes. One adjustment that pet owners may anticipate is how their pets will respond to the new baby.

Something to think about first is whether the dog has shown aggressive behavior toward babies, children, or even other dogs. Even dogs with a history of predatory behavior such as killing small mammals are a sign that you may want to be concerned about the dog being around children. It would be best to discuss this type of behavior with your veterinarian or a veterinary behaviorist before introducing your child to the dog.

Basic precautions should always be taken when introducing your dog to a baby or child. Make sure that your dog will obey basic commands, such as sit, down, and stay. This will allow you to have control and prevent the dog from jumping on the child and unintentionally hurting him or her. It is very important to initially keep the dog confined when the baby is in the house. Never allow the dog to roam free throughout the house in a baby's presence. You do not want to allow the dog to get near the baby without direct supervision.

Introduction of the child to the dog should be done very slowly. Start by letting the dog sniff something that smells like the baby. Do this on multiple occasions so that he/she will become comfortable with the baby's scent. When you decide to finally introduce your baby to the dog, make sure the environment is calm and quiet. You will want to make sure you have some help as well. Allow the dog to sit and sniff the baby. Follow up with some sort of reward for being calm and gentle. You can even use the command "be easy" or "be gentle" to help relax and soothe your pet. Do not allow the dog to get near the baby's face. Be sure not to permit the dog to lick the baby during the first few introductions.

There are some simple rules to follow to keep your baby safe. You should never allow your pet to have access to the baby without direct supervision. You will want to utilize barriers such as baby gates to keep your pet confined. Try to make visits with the baby positive and stress free. Do not overwhelm your dog with the baby's presence, so keep visits short and sweet. Be very patient and observant. If you notice any signs of distress, discomfort, or uneasiness in your pet, remove them from the situation for your child's safety.

Safety is of utmost importance. It may feel that you are neglecting your dog, which was once the "only child" when baby first comes home, but in due time they will be the best of friends.