

OH BABY – THERE'S AN ANIMAL

During the last weeks of pregnancy it is not unusual for relatives to question the parents' love of animals. "I suppose you'll be giving the cat away?" or "Are you sure everything will be OK with the dog?" are all typical questions. The worry ranges from bad hygiene to danger of death for the new baby. These fears are understandable but, according to the experts at the specialist pet store chain, Maxi Zoo, are no reason to give up your beloved pets. There are however a few things to observe when making plans for a new arrival.

JEALOUSY: When dogs and cats live with a family they usually enjoy attention from everyone. However when a new arrival appears on the scene, the situation tends to change somewhat. The mistress is doing almost nothing else but looking after the screaming, struggling little human and the dogs and cats can soon be forgotten. In cats this can invoke annoying protest behaviour such as taking over the mistresses' seat on the sofa and in dogs jealousy can lead to real problems.

In order to make sure nothing happens why not use the time now to set the scene for the baby's arrival. Allow your four-legged friends to sniff at everything you have bought for the baby. The mistress should purposefully have less to do with the animals so that the changes that are to come later do not seem too sudden. Once the baby is there, your dog should be allowed to greet the member of his pack i.e. with lots of sniffing. Hold the child away from him and signal that it is dangerous. Once he has understood, allow him contact with the baby. Praise your pet when he is friendly and include him when feeding, changing and of course going for



walks. Whether you have dogs or cats always take a few minutes of your day to spend time alone with them! By not neglecting and remembering to think of the needs of your pet after the birth you will have a true playmate for your child.

HYGIENE: Normally it is not harmful if your dog goes to lick the baby; however it's face must remain a taboo area. Pet hairs are also harmless if your

pet is well looked after. On the contrary however do get your pet vaccinated and worm them more frequently.

DANGER OF DEATH: Cats love to jump into the cot or the pushchair as it is warm there and they like to feel the baby breathing. However the weight of the cat on the child's breast bone or a tuft of fur in front of the nose or mouth can be fatal. Therefore do not allow the cat near the sleeping child unattended. Make her understand that the cot is off limits. A net over the cot is helpful if the cat is in the habit of sleeping in the same room.

In general a dog should never be left alone with the child even if he is very child friendly. If you really have doubts about your pet then do the puppy test. Give him the opportunity to come into contact with puppies and if he acts aggressively to the babies of his own species, you should be prepared that he will act the same around the new baby. If you observe that your dog behaves hostilely every time he comes into contact with puppies and not just once you should proceed cautiously. Behavioural therapy is necessary for the protection of both the dog and the baby.



Log onto www.maxizoo.ie
for more pet tips and MAXI ZOO special offers.

www.maxizoo.ie