



# We Are Family

A guide to nurturing the child and pet relationship from pregnancy to preschool



Educating today, taking care of tomorrow.®



Office of  
Local Government

# We Are Family



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### Responsible Pet Ownership Education Program

Phone 1800 000 776 or email [info@pets.nsw.gov.au](mailto:info@pets.nsw.gov.au).

Find more information on responsible pet ownership on the Internet at  
[www.wearefamily.nsw.gov.au](http://www.wearefamily.nsw.gov.au)

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# We Are Family

A guide to nurturing the child and pet relationship from pregnancy to preschool

Photo by Peter Brew Bevan

These days, many people are having their first baby in their early thirties, meaning that our pets are often well established in the family unit before babies come along. Pets have long been recognised as valuable members of the family and in many cases are considered 'substitute children' before the arrival of a baby.

Pets and children can form a wonderful close bond and it is heart-warming to watch them interact. Apart from obvious companionship and affection, pets also teach children responsibility and how to care for another living being. Because pets do not judge children or get angry with them, children often trust their pets with their secrets. Those children who participate in walking / exercising the family dog have the added benefit of extra physical activity.

Unfortunately, not all childhood experiences with pets are positive and research clearly shows that children in the 0–4 age bracket are at the greatest risk of hospitalisation for dog attack injuries. Research identifies that 80% of these dog attacks happened in the family home or that of a family member or friend. It is important to note that these attacks involved their own dog or one known to them. From a welfare point of view we are experiencing a large number of pets, particularly cats, being relinquished to shelters, citing the arrival of a

new baby as the reason. Many of these relinquishments are based on inaccurate information, depriving both children and pets of a potentially long and happy relationship.

"We Are Family" is a guide to nurturing the child / pet relationship. It is aimed at educating expectant and new parents on the advantages of allowing their child to experience the joys of pet ownership. It informs you of the potential risks and provides the knowledge, skills and strategies to ensure that the experience is not only a physically and emotionally enriching one, but a safe one as well.

Parents are the first and most influential educators in their child's life journey. Teaching your child about the responsibilities of pet ownership begins from an early age as you nurture and guide their experiences with their pets.

Dr Katrina Warren  
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# Preparation

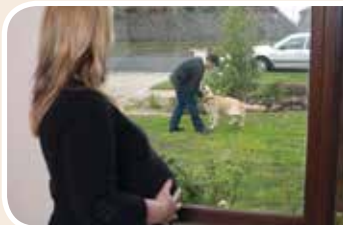
## Preparing our pets for the baby's arrival

All parents want their children and pets to enjoy a wonderful and loving relationship, but we cannot assume that our pets will naturally or easily adapt to the arrival of a new baby.

If your family already includes a pet you will need to help them adjust to your new addition. Dogs and cats are creatures of habit and enjoy routine. It is important you start preparing your pet as soon as you are aware that there is going to be a new baby in the house. Taking the time and effort to prepare your pets for the arrival of a baby will help to ensure a smooth transition and avoid potential jealousy and resentment.



The *Pet Planner* in the back of this booklet will help guide you through many of these issues and will help you navigate the preparation process.



## How will a baby affect the time we have to spend with our pets?

Looking after your baby will impact the amount of time you have to spend with your pet. Your baby will take up a great deal of your time, which will mean less quality time for your pets. It is important you spend time training and preparing your pets to adjust to this change well before the baby's arrival.

## What changes do we need to make to the environment?

Your baby's arrival may also mean that you need to make changes to your pets' physical environment. If you are planning to keep your pets out of certain rooms or areas of the house, then start doing this as soon as possible, so they do not associate the new baby with their exclusion from these areas. Consider how you are going to physically stop your pets from entering these areas.

## Helpful hints

- ☐ Where possible your partner should take over all pet care duties such as feeding, exercise, play and hygiene.
- ☐ Get your pets used to being alone for varied periods of time every day, even if you are at home.
- ☐ Establish new routines as early as possible, so your pets are comfortable with the changes prior to the baby's arrival.
- ☐ Closing doors is not always a viable or preferred option to create barriers. Consider:
  - Baby gates as barriers for dogs
  - Flywire doors mounted in internal doorways for cats.
- ☐ If you need to change your pet's sleeping arrangements, do so as early as possible so they are comfortable with them well before the baby's arrival. It is important that your pets have adequate time to adjust to these changes and that their new sleeping areas are safe and warm.
- ☐ If your pets travel with you in the car you may need to re-organise the seating and restraints, to ensure they are safely separated.





## Is there any pet behaviour we need to modify?

Dogs and cats enjoy routine and are not comfortable with sudden change. Changing your pets' behaviour may not be an easy task. Be patient and keep practising as it may take some time. If you require assistance, your veterinarian or local obedience clubs are excellent resources.

## Grooming

Make sure your pet has been well groomed, including coat, ear cleaning and claw trimming, a few weeks prior to your baby's arrival.



## Helpful hints

- ☐ Your dog should be able to understand and obey basic commands such as sit, stay and drop. They should also be able to relax on a mat by themselves for a period of time.
- ☐ Ignore inappropriate behaviours or attention seeking actions such as "jumping up".
- ☐ If you require help or advice with your pet's grooming you may wish to engage a professional groomer. Contact your veterinarian for recommendations.
- ☐ If you intend to walk your dog with the baby in a pram, you should practise this before your baby arrives. Do not assume your dog will automatically be comfortable with this situation. Teach the dog to walk by the side of the pram. Never tie your dog's lead to the pram.





## Organising a health check at the vet

In the first six months following your baby's arrival, you will be very busy and may not have time to arrange your pet's regular check-up. It is good to get this done prior to the baby's birth.

## Who will look after the pets while you are in hospital with the baby?

Do you have someone who will be able to look after your pets while the baby is born and during the hectic few days that follow? Your baby may arrive unexpectedly, even in the middle of the night, so having this planned well in advance is important. Ideally your pets will remain in their own home, as this is where they are most comfortable and relaxed. Unfortunately this is not always possible.

## Helpful hints

- ☐ Make sure your pet is up-to-date with their worming tablets, flea treatments and vaccinations.
- ☐ Consider the advantages of de-sexing your pet.
- ☐ If there are any behaviour modification issues you need to address, your veterinarian is a great first point of call for advice.
- ☐ If someone is coming into your home to care for them, familiarise your pets with their carer well before the birth. Ideally the person should also be familiar with your pet's routine.
- ☐ Make sure you have a good supply of pet food, which will not only see you through the hospital visit but also the first week at home.
- ☐ If they are being cared for away from the family home by family or friends, make sure they are familiar with these people and ideally with the home where they will be staying.
- ☐ If your pets are going to a boarding establishment, do your homework well in advance to source a reputable facility. Discuss options for getting your pets to the facility, keeping in mind that your baby may arrive in the middle of the night.



## What new noises and smells will they encounter?

If your pets have not experienced a baby, there will be a range of new sounds and smells they must get used to. Remember, our pets' senses of smell and hearing are far more developed than ours. We need to familiarise them with new smells and noises before the baby arrives. Provide lots of positive reinforcement while introducing these new sounds and smells.



## Helpful hints

- ☐ Get a recording of baby noises and play it in areas where the baby will most often be, so that your pets can get used to these 'strange' sounds. Over time, increase the volume. If your pet becomes uncomfortable, reduce the volume and start the process again. Continue this until your pet is relaxed with baby sounds.
- ☐ Allow your pet to come into the nursery with you to smell and investigate the furniture and walk around under your supervision.
- ☐ Allow your pet to explore smells by applying lotions and powders on your hand and letting them smell.







# The first six months

## Bringing the baby home

You have spent a great deal of time and effort preparing your pets so they are comfortable with their new environment and routines. The next step in ensuring your child and pets enjoy a great relationship is to make sure their initial meeting is a positive experience.

Research clearly identifies children in the 0–4 age group are most at risk of hospitalisation due to dog attacks. *The first six months* section looks at a variety of strategies to help you ensure your child is not at risk. It focuses on the need to actively supervise all interaction between your baby and pets. If you can't actively supervise, then make sure they are securely separated so there cannot be any physical contact. Understanding the potential risks associated with having a baby and pets will reduce the likelihood of accidents.



## Let your pet smell something the baby has worn

It is getting close to bringing baby home. Are your pets ready?

Both humans and dogs share the senses of sight, hearing and smell. While humans communicate mostly through hearing and sight, dogs primarily communicate by smelling. Bringing home an item of clothing the baby has worn for your dog to smell is an important step in getting your dog ready for the arrival of the baby.

## The initial greeting

When the new mum arrives home, it is a good idea for her to greet her pets without the baby first. To her pets, a new mother will look and smell different to the last time they saw her, while she was pregnant. They will also be excited to see her.

## Helpful hints

- ☐ Prior to the baby coming home, offer your pets a blanket or clothes with the scent of your baby on it. You should accompany this with positive reinforcement, such as stroking and reassurance, which will help your pet associate the baby with a positive experience.
- ☐ Wait until everyone is relaxed and settled before you attempt to introduce the new arrival.





## Introducing your dog to the baby

The ideal time to make the introduction is when everyone is calm and relaxed.

If possible make sure your dog has been well exercised, but not over excited, prior to the meeting.

## Introducing the cat to the baby

Cats are less likely to want to make a huge fuss of the newborn. They may be curious but will tend to investigate in their own time. While nursing the baby, call the cat and allow it to come to you.

### Helpful hints

- ☐ Bring the dog in on a leash.
- ☐ Allow the dog to approach mum and smell the baby.
- ☐ As part of this process you may wish to unwrap the baby's feet so that the dog can smell them.
- ☐ It is important you gently reassure and positively reinforce the dog with praise and stroking.
- ☐ Repeat the process regularly over the first few weeks until the dog's curiosity factor declines.
- ☐ Under no circumstances should you force the dog to meet the baby. If it is not comfortable, stop and try another time.
- ☐ Seek professional advice if your dog continues to show reluctance.
- ☐ Do not force the cat or restrain it, as it may associate the baby with a negative experience.
- ☐ Allow the cat to approach and smell the baby.
- ☐ As part of this process you may wish to unwrap the baby's feet so that the cat can smell them.
- ☐ It is important that you gently reassure and positively reinforce the cat with praise and stroking.
- ☐ Provide the cat with plenty of opportunities over the first few weeks, to ensure it is comfortable around the new baby.
- ☐ Seek professional advice if your cat continues to show reluctance.

## Maintaining routines

No doubt you have been working hard on your pet's routine prior to the baby's arrival, so that it is relaxed and comfortable with any changes. Maintaining your routines is important as it reassures your pets that all is well even with the arrival of the new family member.

It is a good idea to make sure your pets also spend time away from you when the baby is not around. It is important that your pets do not associate the baby with being separated or alone. If you are feeding the baby and putting the dog outside, you may wish to consider giving your dog something to do, such as playing with a toy. A 'Kong' stuffed with treats or something pleasant to chew on may also keep it happy and occupied.

## Helpful hints

- ☐ Where possible, find some daily quality time for each of your pets.
- ☐ Grooming and going for a walk are great 'quality time' activities.
- ☐ Sitting on the couch and giving your pet a pat is relaxing for both you and them.







**Approximately half  
of the bite injuries  
were to the head,  
face and neck.**

**0-4**

**age group is  
the most at risk.**

**Most children  
are bitten by their  
own dog or one  
known to them.**



## **Facts about dog attacks**

Are you aware that children in the 0–4 age group are at the highest risk for dog attack related injuries requiring hospital treatment?

Did you know that:

- Most dog attacks requiring hospital treatment occur in the victim's home or that of family or friends?
- Most victims are bitten by their own dog or a dog known to them?
- Victims tend to be bitten on the face or head due to their height?

Although these facts can be daunting, there is no need to think the risk is too high or that the only answer is to surrender your dog. If you have done your preparation and you are willing to actively supervise all interactions, the relationship between your child and pet will be a happy and safe one.

**Every dog is capable of biting  
no matter the size or breed.**



## Active supervision is the key

All interaction between your pets and your baby needs to be actively supervised. This means that you are in a position to immediately intervene. Pets and children do not have an inbuilt understanding of how they should behave around each other. During the first six months, while your baby is not mobile, your focus needs to be on ensuring that your pets do not have access to your child unless you are actively supervising.

## Helpful hints

- ☐ If you need to leave the room, even for a short time, take one of them with you.
- ☐ Do not give your pet attention only when your baby is out of the room and then ignore it when the baby is present. Your dog needs attention from you while the baby is both in and out of the room.



## Supervise or separate

If you cannot actively supervise then you must securely separate your child and your pet. Make sure your extended family and visitors are also vigilant in following the “supervise or separate” rule and any other house rules you have in place.

It is important that your pets do not see separation time as a punishment. Make sure there are positives such as toys, treats or a quick game to keep them happy.



## Helpful hints

- ☐ Create a safe and secure area where you can separate your dog from your baby.
- ☐ Never assume your pet is securely separated, check to make sure!
- ☐ A dog barrier or security type door to the nursery for cats will ensure that your pets cannot disturb your baby while it is resting.
- ☐ Set up house rules, such as making sure all doors and gates are closed behind you.
- ☐ Have back up plans for when you need to leave quickly in the event of an unexpected phone call or knock on the door.
- ☐ You can securely separate very easily by putting your pets outside or in a room such as the laundry. Make sure there are plenty of things to keep your pets happy and occupied.
- ☐ Placing a box of treats near the back door makes them easy for you to access and will help make sure your pets are happy when they go outside.



## Who else is looking after your baby?

Many mums re-enter the workforce soon after their baby is born. Grandparents, family and friends are often used for child minding and as caregivers. If they have their own pets, it is important you make them aware of the need to actively supervise or separate. Hopefully they have been preparing their pets for the new arrival too! Grandparents' pets, in particular, may not have been socialised around young children.



## Helpful hints

- ☐ We strongly advise you to provide this booklet to all caregivers.
- ☐ Remember, if a caregiver is coming into your home to look after your child, it is important that you inform them of your routines and requirements, particularly in relation to active supervision and separation.
- ☐ If your baby is being cared for in the caregiver's home, do not be afraid to ask what rules they have in place with their pets and if necessary advise them to actively supervise or securely separate. If they are not prepared to do so, you may need to consider finding another caregiver.







## Baby on the move

The toddler stage brings a new dimension to the child / pet relationship. Until now you have only needed to concern yourself with ensuring your pets cannot reach your baby. Now that the baby is capable of moving around, it is also time to turn your attention to making sure your child cannot access your pets or their belongings.

**Mobility + opportunity = accident**



Toddlers are also unsteady on their feet, which means they may accidentally hurt or upset your pets, with potentially painful consequences. At this stage it is important that you not only actively supervise or separate them, but also begin teaching your child appropriate ways to interact with your pets. Toddlers are not capable of recognising the warning signs our pets may give them, so it is important that you are always actively supervising any interaction and are in control of the situation.

### **Supervise or separate**

If you cannot supervise your child and your pet, then you need to be sure that you can safely separate them. One great idea is to establish a pet-free zone for the child and a child-free zone for the pets. As your child grows you may wish to consider an outdoor zone for each as well. These areas need to be adequately secured. Consider the ability of little hands and feet to slip through barriers. It is important that the areas for your pets are comfortable and engaging, so that they do not stress during their time away from the family.

It is even more important now to have a plan for separating you child and your pets when you have to leave quickly, even when it is only for a few moments.

An inappropriate action, such as an accidental poke in the eye from a child, takes two seconds, and a defensive / aggressive reaction from your pet even less. Again, remember to ensure your pets have plenty to keep them happy and occupied during separation time, making it a positive experience.



**The most effective way of minimising any risks is to actively supervise all interaction or separate them.**





## Avoiding inappropriate behaviours

Pets and children do not have a basic understanding of how to behave around each other. Toddlers may accidentally do things that could hurt or upset your pet.

Toddlers tend to grab fur, pull ears and tails, and poke at eyes and noses. We may consider a harmless hug around the neck a sign of affection, however your pet may not!

You must make sure that your children do not have the opportunity to do these types of things to your pets.

Remember that your pets do not have the ability to tell children to stop and will react according to their instincts. If they are feeling threatened or hurt and can't escape, they may bite or scratch.

Once your child is mobile, you need to be much more aware of your home environment, to ensure that your pets and child cannot access each other without supervision.



## Helpful hints

- ☐ Encourage your toddler to interact with your pets in an appropriate manner and discourage any inappropriate behaviour.
- ☐ Always provide your pets with positive reinforcement when they are interacting with your child.





## Avoiding risks with your pets

### Dogs

As your child grows, it is a good idea to look into things that need changing, such as the addition of more baby gates when the baby begins to crawl and walk. This time will come faster than you might anticipate.

### Cats

Cats pose less of a threat in relation to injuries requiring hospitalisation, however a child's delicate new skin and a cat's claws are certainly not a good mix. Keep in mind that a toddler and a cat are at similar heights, therefore faces and eyes are at risk.

We know that a baby's jerky movements can catch a cat unaware and cause it to defend itself. In most cases a cat's first reaction, when feeling threatened, is to escape. If they cannot escape they are likely to scratch, or even bite in extreme cases.



## Helpful hints

- ☐ Ensure you have pet-free and children-free zones in your home.
- ☐ You should provide resting areas that allow your pets to get away from curious children.
- ☐ You need to consider where you place pet items, such as litter trays, food and water bowls, toys and pet bedding. Ideally these should always be in child-free areas.
- ☐ Water bowls must be considered as a potential drowning hazard for toddlers and should be kept in the child-free areas.
- ☐ Provide areas for your cat where it can get away from your toddler. Cats have a very good leap so consider a high perch.
- ☐ Consider installing a cat door. Most designs allow you to control the door movement, which can restrict the cat from returning without your knowledge.





**The most effective way of minimising any risks is to actively supervise all interaction between your child and pets, or else separate them.**

Research shows us that there are certain situations and behaviours that are considered high-risk in relation to dog bite injuries with young children. Ensuring you can minimise these opportunities will greatly reduce the risk of incident or injury.



## Helpful hints

Ensure your pets are left alone when they are:

- Sleeping
- Eating or chewing a bone
- Playing with their toys
- Unwell or injured
- On their beds or in their kennels
- Using the litter box or scratching pole.

Don't allow your child to:

- Play roughly
- Tease or hurt your pets
- Handle your pets inappropriately
- Grab your pets around the neck
- Squeeze your pets
- Wrestle your pets on the floor or ground.





## The importance of modelling positive behaviours

Our toddlers are learning from us all the time. Research suggests that a high percentage of our total learning is done prior to going to school. Pets also retain what they learn at a young age. It is therefore very important that we model positive behaviours. If you play roughly with your pets, then expect your toddler to do the same. Likewise, the reaction of your pet may be inappropriate because you have taught them to react this way.

Before you decide to engage in rough play with your pet, ask yourself:

- What am I teaching my child?
- What am I teaching my pet?





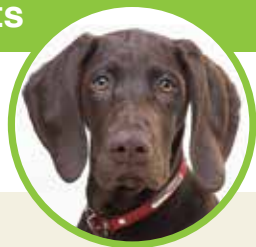
# Understanding our dogs and cats

Many of us make the mistake of thinking that our pets think the same way that we do. They don't! Therefore we cannot assume they will react to a given situation in the same way we would. It is important that parents with pets have a basic understanding of dog and cat behaviour. Our dogs and cats cannot talk, however their body language and verbal cues will give us a good indication as to whether they are relaxed, uncomfortable or not happy in a given situation. This section explains their basic body language, helping you to recognise potentially dangerous situations.

## Dogs, cats and their body language

Dogs and cats communicate with us using a range of facial characteristics, body positions and vocal sounds. It is important that these are looked at as a group rather than in isolation, as they can be confusing. For example a wagging tail is usually associated with

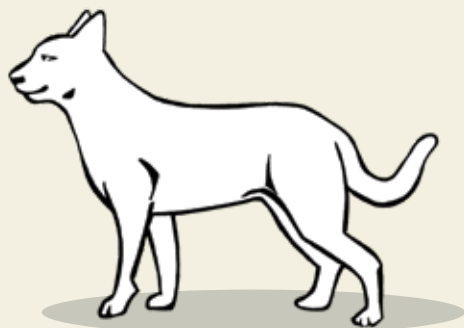
a happy dog, yet the position of the tail and the way the tail is wagging may indicate fear or aggression. It is also important to understand that these are generalisations, which may not be exhibited by all dogs and cats in similar situations.



## Dogs and their body language

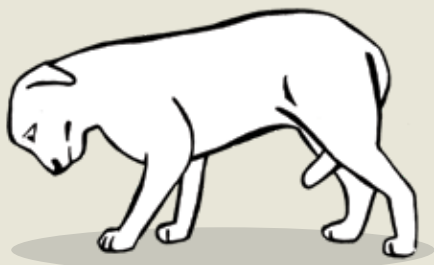
### Happy / relaxed

- Body is generally relaxed.
- Head is held high.
- The tail wags freely and enthusiastically.
- Tongue hangs out in a relaxed manner.



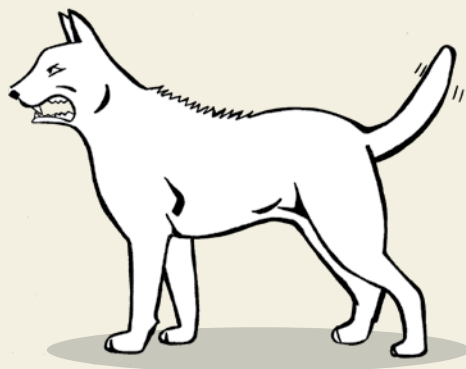
### Nervous / frightened

- Reduces its size by crouching or rolling over to show its underbelly.
- Tail may tuck between legs or move from side to side in a lowered position.
- Ears back or flat on the head.
- Eyes may appear slightly closed and avoid contact.
- May extend its tongue in a licking motion.



### Aggressive / ready to attack

- Stands on the tips of its paws.
- Hackles on neck and back standing erect.
- Tail may wag slowly and stiffly and held high.
- May snarl with lips pulled back showing teeth.
- Eyes wide open and staring.
- Ears will be erect.
- Growling and snarling.



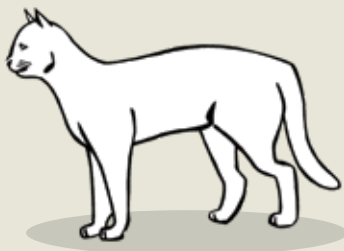


# Cats and their body language



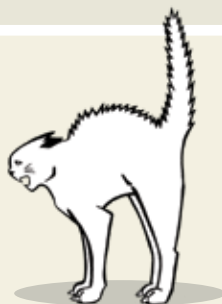
## Happy

- Body is generally relaxed.
- Tail carried high with the tip hanging over the back or relaxed and low.
- Ears erect.
- Eyes are wide open or if completely relaxed may appear half closed.
- Whiskers in neutral position.



## Defensive

- Tail erect and fluffed up.
- Back arched and ears flat to head.
- Whiskers back and pupils dilated.
- Hissing.



## Frightened / timid

- Body low to the ground making itself look small.
- Generally the ears are laid flat on the head.
- Whiskers are laid back or flattened against the face.
- Tail may be under the body.



## Aggressive / ready to pounce

- Tail low and swishing.
- Straight back with head in line with the body.
- Ears forward.
- Whiskers bristling forward.
- Hissing with mouth open and teeth bared.
- Claws out.





## Zoonoses

### What are they?

There are a range of diseases which our pets can pass onto humans. These can also be referred to as zoonoses. Worms, Ringworm and Toxoplasmosis, in particular, relate to our children, pet dogs and cats. Good hygiene practices, regular worming and flea treatment and keeping your environment free of cat and dog faeces will go a long way to minimising the risk of these and other diseases being passed on.

## Diseases pets may pass onto the unborn baby

### Toxoplasmosis

#### What is it?

An infection with a parasite called “*Toxoplasma gondii*” which infects warm blooded animals including humans. Usually it causes no symptoms, and many people will already have come into contact with this parasite without knowing it, and will have built up immunity. It can however cause serious disease in unborn babies. Fortunately this is rare, but pregnant women should follow simple precautions to minimize the risks of infection.

#### How do you get it?

- Eating contaminated raw or partly cooked meat.
- Using contaminated food utensils that have been in contact with raw meat.
- Contact with infected cat faeces.
- Consuming contaminated drinking water.

#### Should I get rid of the cat?

There is absolutely no need to surrender your cat because you are pregnant. By following some simple guidelines you will be able to minimize any risk. You are at far greater risk of catching toxoplasmosis from inadequate food preparation and under cooking meat than you are from your cat. According to a European Study in the British Medical Journal, the risk of your baby getting toxoplasmosis from your cat is approximately 1 in 1,000,000.

## How can you avoid it?

### Cat faeces.

Generally the key areas you may come into contact with cat faeces are the litter tray and soil in the garden. To avoid contamination you need to avoid hand to mouth contact.

Ensure the trays are thoroughly cleaned and disinfected at least daily.

- It takes about 24 hours for the infected faeces to become contagious.
- Carefully pour litter into a plastic bag, tie it up and place into the bin.
- Wash the tray with very hot water and detergent.
- Leave the cleaning of the trays to your partner and ensure they also practise good hygiene.
- No contact means minimized risk!
- If “mum to be” has to clean the trays use rubber gloves.

Wear gloves when you are going to be handling any types of soil or sand. All cats will use sand and soil as their outdoor toilet trays. The risk of handling contaminated faeces is higher because you are not disposing within the initial 24 hour period and it can remain contagious in the soil for months.

Always wash your hands thoroughly after gardening, cleaning trays, handling your cat.



## Avoid feeding your cat raw meat.

The parasite can be carried in raw meat. Make sure that all meat is cooked thoroughly (until the juices run clear) the parasite cannot survive at high temperatures so this is very important. Good quality commercial pet foods are a good alternative.

Prepare your food hygienically and cook all meats thoroughly. Freezing will also generally kill the cysts.

You are at much greater risk of getting toxoplasmosis from the consumption of inadequately prepared and under cooked foods than from your cat.

### Kitchen hygiene is a must.

- Always wash hands thoroughly prior to preparing foods.
- Always wash utensils/ boards thoroughly which have come into contact with uncooked foods.
- Thoroughly wash all vegetables prior to cooking and eating.

### Preparing and cooking meat.

- Avoid handling or eating uncooked or under cooked meats, or use disposable gloves.
- Cook all meats thoroughly to an internal temperature of 160 degrees.
- Fluids from the meat should be clear.

**If you are still concerned consider a blood test prior to or during pregnancy. This will help to determine the level of risk.**

## Diseases pets may pass onto children

### Roundworm

#### What is it?

Pets commonly have large parasitic worms living in their intestine which are called roundworms. Humans can be infected by accidentally consuming the eggs which are passed in the faeces. Children are susceptible to round worm because they tend to play in areas such as backyards and sand pits which may be contaminated with dog or cat faeces. The eggs hatch in the digestive tract and the larvae migrate to various organs.

#### What are the signs of infection in pets?

Most pets will not show any signs of infection.

Pets with extreme worm burdens may show bloated belly, blood or mucus in the stool, diarrhoea, loss of appetite and vomiting.

#### What are the signs of infection in children?

Mild infections may not cause symptoms. More serious infections may cause abdominal pain, poor or ravenous appetite, upset stomach and diarrhoea. Occasionally larvae get trapped in blood vessels behind the eye or in the brain which cause reduced vision or blindness.

#### How do you treat your pets?

Worm your pets with a good quality "all wormer" on a regular basis and make sure that your environment is free of pet faeces. Seek advice from your Veterinarian on appropriate treatments.

#### How do you treat your child?

Seek medical advice as to the best treatment for your child. There are some antiparasitic drugs they may need to be prescribed.

#### How can you prevent it?

- Worm all dogs and cats in the house regularly.
- Don't allow your pets to lick your child's face.
- Always wash your child's hands after handling your pet.
- Avoid hands in mouths until after the hands are washed.
- Dispose of pet's faeces as soon as possible.
- Cover sand pits to prevent contamination by cats and dogs.

### Ringworm

#### What is it?

It is actually not a worm but is a fungal infection of the skin. It can spread from direct contact or from things such as infected bedding but can also get into carpet, furniture and air conditioning and heating ducts.

#### What are the signs of infection in pets?

Cats can be carriers and show little or any sign of infection. It is generally seen in kittens or young cats before their immune systems have had the chance to fully develop. The infection will normally



appear as a circular patch of hair loss commonly one to four centimetres in diameter. The head and paws are the most commonly affected areas.

### **What are the signs of infection in children?**

In humans it will appear as a red scaly area and may have a target type appearance or there may be a patch of hair loss.

### **How do you treat your child?**

Although not serious it is advisable to seek medical advice as soon as possible as it can normally be treated with an ointment.

### **How can you prevent it?**

- Thoroughly wash hands after handling pets or playing in the garden.
- Avoid direct contact with infected animals.

## **Cat Scratch Disease**

### **What is it?**

It is caused by bacteria called “*Bartonella henselae*” which is passed between cats by fleas and possibly ticks. It is more likely to be present in kittens however they usually only carry the bacteria for a limited time. It is passed onto humans through a cat scratch, or bite, or exposure to cat saliva and initially appears as a minor infection around the wound site approximately 7 – 12 days after the incident. In severe cases it can develop into swelling of the lymph nodes.

### **What are the signs of infection in our cats?**

Cats do not usually display any signs of infection.

### **What are the signs of infection in our children?**

A mild infection at the injury site normally appears 7 – 12 days after the incident. Symptoms may include slight fever, headaches, chills and backache.

### **How do you treat your pet?**

As your cat will normally not show any symptoms very few are treated. Contact your veterinarian for advice.

### **How do you treat your child?**

Seek medical advice if your child has these symptoms. Diagnostic tests may be needed to exclude other illnesses. Although this is usually a mild illness, antibiotic treatment may be needed.

### **How can we prevent it?**

- Avoid rough play or any activities which encourage the cat to scratch or bite.
- Don't allow cats to lick open wounds such as scratches.
- Always thoroughly wash all cat bites and scratches with soap and running water.
- Treat your cats regularly with a quality flea treatment.



# Pet Planner Checklist

## Time

- Do you need to change their current feeding routine? ..... ☐ Yes ☐ No
- Do you need to change their current exercise routine? ..... ☐ Yes ☐ No
- Have you organised a check up at the veterinarian? ..... ☐ Yes ☐ No
- Have you organised who is going to look after your pets when you are in hospital? ..... ☐ Yes ☐ No
- Who will clean up after them? .....

## Environment

**Set up the nursery as early as possible so the pets get used to it.**

- List areas which are going to be pet free zones. ....
- How are you going to stop the pets from entering these areas? .....
- What are you going to do to train them to stay out of these areas? .....
- Do you need to consider a barrier or security door? ..... ☐ Yes ☐ No
- Are you going to need to confine or restrain them when they are inside? ..... ☐ Yes ☐ No
- Where are they going to sleep when the baby arrives? .....
- If this is a different area, how are you going to acclimatise them? .....
- Will you need to purchase different bedding? ..... ☐ Yes ☐ No
- Are they going to spend more time outside? ..... ☐ Yes ☐ No
- Have you made sure it is a secure area? ..... ☐ Yes ☐ No
- Do you need to build / purchase a run or enclosure? ..... ☐ Yes ☐ No
- Are there outdoor areas you don't want them to access? ..... ☐ Yes ☐ No
- Are there plants which may be poisonous to your pets? ..... ☐ Yes ☐ No
- Does it cater for their daily needs of shelter, food and water? ..... ☐ Yes ☐ No
- Will their environment meet their physical and mental needs? ..... ☐ Yes ☐ No

## Behaviour modification

### Do you need to train your dog to:

- Understand basic commands such as sit, drop, and stay? ☐ Yes ☐ No
- Walk comfortably on a loose lead? ☐ Yes ☐ No
- Sit calmly while in a harness in the car? ☐ Yes ☐ No
- Be comfortable and relaxed spending short periods of time in a crate or confined space? ☐ Yes ☐ No
- Walk comfortably on leash to the side and behind the wheels of the pram? ☐ Yes ☐ No

### Do you need to train your cat to:

- Walk on a harness? ☐ Yes ☐ No
- Stay inside? ☐ Yes ☐ No
- Use a litter tray? ☐ Yes ☐ No
- Travel in a crate? ☐ Yes ☐ No
- Go out into a cat enclosure and / or use a cat flap? ☐ Yes ☐ No

- List any existing behaviours you would like to change before the baby arrives.

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- Identify how you are going to go about modifying any of these behaviours.

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- Do you need to seek professional advice to modify any of the behaviours? ☐ Yes ☐ No

## When the baby comes home

### Keep in mind you may have had a cesarean

- Do you have a good stock of pet food and treats on hand? ☐ Yes ☐ No
- Have you organised someone to exercise the dog? ☐ Yes ☐ No
- Have you organised someone to help with your pet's grooming requirements? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Notes:

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# Responsible Pet Ownership Education Program

*"We'll see you again in preschool"*

Find pet information and advice on the website

**[www.wearefamily.nsw.gov.au](http://www.wearefamily.nsw.gov.au)**

or contact your local council, animal welfare organisations,  
veterinarian or dog and cat associations.

Please complete our brief and anonymous survey below  
as your feedback is important to us!

**[www.surveymonkey.com/s/We\\_are\\_family\\_survey](http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/We_are_family_survey)**

