

Tell Your Dog You're Pregnant: a guide to baby and pet bonding

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A husband and wife vet science team has developed a guide to help parents introduce their new baby to the family pet.

Just as mums and dads-to-be attend parenting classes, [dogs](#) also need help adapting to life with a new baby said [veterinarian](#) Dr Lewis Kirkham.

Dr Kirkham and his wife Debra who works at the University of Melbourne's Veterinary Hospital have developed the book 'Tell Your Dog You're Pregnant' so that families can prepare their dog for the noises and household changes that a new baby brings, and hopefully build a strong bond between dog and baby.

The birth of his two daughters ignited Dr Kirkham's passion in educating expectant [parents](#) about the smooth transition from a child-free, dog owning family to a larger family with a new baby.

"As a vet I am very interested in understanding the bond between owners and their pets, so this prompted us to develop a guide to assist in bonding between the dog and a newborn baby," Dr Kirkham said.

"To many couples the dog is their 'fur' child and there are a lot of changes that will occur when a human baby arrives. Preparing the dog early for these changes can help prevent behavioural issues such as; house-soiling, aggression, destruction and attention-seeking."

After graduating from the University of Melbourne as a vet, Dr Kirkham gained further qualifications in animal behaviour and developed the book ‘Tell Your Dog You’re Pregnant’ with his wife in his spare time.

The book provides a step by step guide to prepare a dog for a baby in the house including the latest in animal behavioural psychology to help owners introduce their baby to their pet, read and interpret a dog’s body language and adjust the household to keep the dog calm.

Dr Kirkham has provided advice to many dog owning couples who were expecting a baby and found there was a lack of good quality baby and toy noises available.

“When our first daughter was born we recorded some of her sounds and then expanded and remastered these sounds to create a CD, which accompanies the book, to familiarize dogs with a range of baby sounds, including squeaky toys, crying, sneezing, giggling and bath splashing,” Debra Kirkham said.

The book also includes information on recognising a dog’s warning signs if it is not adapting to the new family structure and to know when to seek professional assistance for behavioural problems.

More information: www.babyandpet.com.au/

Provided by University of Melbourne

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