



**Paw Perfect Introductions podcast**  
**Episode Five – Introducing your baby to a puppy or adult dog**

**Cathy:** Hello, this is episode five of the Paw Perfect Introductions podcast. I'm Cathy Beer from Pets4Life, and with me is the lovely animal behaviourist Dr Joann Righetti from Pet Problems Solved. Our Paw Perfect Introductions topic today is how to introduce a baby to your puppy or adult dog. Hi, Jo. How are you doing today?

**Dr Righetti:** I am very well. Fortunately for me, I don't have babies in the home right now, but I always have dogs, I always have children, and cats, too. It's a great mix to have your dogs and your baby together.

**Cathy:** Oh, good. Well, personally, I haven't experienced raising a puppy and having a baby. It sounds pretty daunting to me. I can only imagine parents have a lot on their plate with all the excitement and challenges of bringing home a new baby, not to mention the lack of sleep. So, Jo, what do you suggest for parents so they can have as smooth as possible introduction between their baby and their pup or adult dog?

**Dr Righetti:** Well, when you've got a dog at home and you're bringing home a baby, you've really got to think in advance. You can't wait until the baby arrives and expect it to all go smoothly. Chances are that it will, because there are dogs that are used to things going on in our homes and they're very accommodating, and as long as they have their time with us, they're generally pretty well behaved. <Laughs> There are lots of exceptions to that, of course.

**Cathy:** Yeah.

**Dr Righetti:** We want to make sure. Obviously there's a danger with dogs and kids. So we always need supervision. It's best to get ready beforehand. So, long before your baby arrives, you can start restricting your pet's access to certain areas of your home if you're going to do this when your baby's arriving. You might want to say, the dog is not going to go into the baby's room—that you actually restrict your dog then. If you're going to find it hard to walk your dog, you might want to employ the services of a dog walker before the baby arrives so your dog gets used to that. When it comes to practicality, you can actually think about things like playing sounds of babies. Now, this will drive most people crazy. <Laughs> But crying babies make a lot of noise, and so you can have tapes of babies crying and sounds that babies make around your home, and that will get your existing dog used to the idea that a baby's going to arrive. You can even get

a doll or a teddy bear—wrap it up like a real baby and carry it around your home. That might seem a bit strange, but it's a good thing because what you'll do then is you'll realise how much attention you need to give that child, and your dog will be seeing you holding something, talking to something, being that nurturing way. And a lot of dogs demand attention when you actually get like that with a child. So you can practice this, and it lets you see how the dog's reaction is going to be, and if that's something you're going to have to worry about. But remember, don't leave that doll or that teddy down on the floor besides your pet; you don't want them to get hold of it or anything. So, treat it like a real baby. Put it away when you're not nursing it. Other things: you can bring scents around if you're going to be using lotions or things about babies—have them around your home. Dogs are ruled by noses, so they're going to get used to that scent. If you've got a friend with a baby, let them come over and visit. Control your dog, put it on a lead, and just see how your dog reacts there. And all this will give you clues about how your existing dog is going to react. If you have a puppy, then good luck, because that's going to be hard work. You're going to have to entertain that puppy a lot as well as get used to having a baby. So for puppies, I would be enlisting the help of family members, friends, the neighbours' kids—older kids. Anyone who can help you with your puppy will be a godsend when that child finally arrives.

**Cathy:** We talked about, in episode four, crate training your puppy.

**Dr Righetti:** Yeah! Yeah, absolutely. There are times that you'll just want your dog to be out of your way—while you're changing a nappy, perhaps... While you're feeding the baby... When the baby gets a bit more mobile, perhaps, or you want to put it down on the floor to have some kick time, and you don't necessarily want your dog to be licking its face or anything, then a crate can be a great idea. You can have a soft crate; you can have a playpen; you can have a traditional crate—get your dog in there. Make it positive. Put the dog's toys, put a treat in there—fit them in there. You know, somewhere the dog can go and feel safe. And when that baby starts getting mobile, the dog will probably go in there and think, *Oh, thank goodness I can get away from this baby*. So it works both ways. It's good for the child, it's good for the dog, and probably good for all of the adults, too.

**Cathy:** I can imagine. That supervision is critical, isn't it, between the puppy and the baby. You can't leave anything to chance.

**Dr Righetti:** Oh, definitely. No, we can't. And people often do assume that everything will be okay, and then—too late. Accidents happen. If people are worried about their dog, then I'd say get straight to getting some expert help. Talk to your vet about getting a referral to a behaviourist. <Meowing> Oh, there's my cat coming to have a visit. <Laughs> Do you hear my cat here in the background, *meow, meow*? She's lived through a few babies, I have to say.

**Cathy:** Oh, okay. <Laughs>

**Dr Righetti:** So, yeah, supervision is number one. Never leave babies or young children and dogs alone together.

**Cathy:** That's fantastic, Jo. And it's lovely to hear from your cat as well and see what your cat thinks, too—her tips. I'm sure expecting parents will find these tips very helpful and make them feel more relaxed and confident for when that baby comes, and help prepare their pup for the new arrival. Next time, we'll be chatting about introducing your new baby to a kitten or a cat in episode six. So thanks, Jo!

**Dr Righetti:** Thanks, Cathy!

-ENDS-

## **Contact Us**

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