



Dogs' Homes of Tasmania

Operated by the Tasmanian Canine Defence League.
Locations at Hobart, Devonport, & Burnie.

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Caring for Dogs~ Maintaining Health & Wellbeing



Dogs Babies & Toddlers

*A guide to household harmony
for parents of babies and toddlers*

Introducing your dog to your new baby

It is important for household harmony to ensure that the arrival of a new baby doesn't create a negative association for your dog. If adjustments to the dog's routine are likely, phase them in gradually before the baby comes home. Prepare and train your dog prior to the baby's arrival by:

- Teach and reward your dog in how you would like it to behave
- Tape babies crying and desensitise your dog to this sound.
- While your baby is in hospital, bring home a blanket or item of clothing that smell of the baby and allow your dog to sniff them
- Develop a routine for your dog which you will be able to continue after baby's arrival home
- The amount of time spent with your dog, where the dog will be fed, where the dog will sleep - if these arrangements are to change, make the changes prior to the birth of the baby
- Reward your dog for calm behaviour around your baby

Toddlers and dogs

Toddlers and young children do not have the understanding or skills to handle a dog appropriately.

A toddler has little concept of the pain inflicted on a dog when he/she handles it roughly. A dog's natural reflex when threatened may be to defend itself by biting the child who is inflicting the pain. For this reason, toddlers need constant supervision around dogs. It is recommended that any child under seven years of age not be left unattended with a dog.

It is important to create secure areas for your dog where it can be separated from your toddler when constant supervision is not possible. This is for the safety of your toddler and your dog!

Young children need to be taught how to interact appropriately with dogs and require positive messages and role models. It is important that parents model the desired behaviours and explain what they are doing and why.

The golden rules for a happy and safe household

- Babies and toddlers should never be left alone with a dog
- Interaction between you and your dog should **not** be limited to times when the baby/toddler is asleep
- Rewarding your dog with praise or food when the baby or toddler is in its presence creates a positive association for the dog. (Shouting at the dog or locking it outside will create a negative association)
- Discourage your toddler from grabbing or hugging your dog around its neck- This is threatening and frightening for many dogs
- Start teaching your toddler about appropriate behaviour around dogs at the earliest opportunity
- Plan ahead to reduce the risks to baby/toddler and dog and take notice of any early warning signs

Teaching a young child about patting a dog

Children learn most effectively by 'doing'. By modelling the correct way to pat and then guiding your toddler to do the same, he/she can learn how to pat your dog appropriately and safely.

It is recommended that dogs be patted under the chin and on the chest. (Some dogs are nervous about being patted on top of the head, because they cannot see what the hand is doing)

Show your child which parts of the dog they may touch, for example under the dog's chin and on the chest.

Hold and guide the child's hand to show a gentle stroking action and where to pat.

Reward the child for patting correctly and reward the dog for calm behaviour while being patted

Don't assume the child will remember after just one session - repeat modelling and guiding for a period of time until the child remembers where to pat and how to pat.

Be aware that children raised with tolerant and friendly dogs could be at risk with other dogs who may not be used to young children.

Burnie Dogs' Home

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Burnie TAS 7320**

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Devonport Dogs' Home

**Spreyton Park Racecourse
Devonport TAS 7310**

Ph: (03) 6427 2178

Hobart Dogs' Home

**101 Scotts Rd.,
Risdon Vale TAS 7016**

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