Tips to include family dogs while Mom & baby establish breastfeeding.

Breastfeeding your baby is an amazing opportunity to bond and learn about your baby's individual personality while providing amazing health benefits. The early days in your breastfeeding relationship are critical and will be filled with a wide range of emotions from joy and pride to frustration.   Any time your emotions run high or low your dog is observing you and sometimes may need your guidance. It is with this in mind that I have created some tips to help you and your family dog as you bond and establish the wonderful relationship breastfeeding your baby offers.

When Mom and baby are calm and relaxed while nursing:
●This is a great time to toss your dog treats with one hand.
●Ask your dog to perform basic skills during this time allows you to include them in a structured way.
Dogs gain familiarity with the baby through observation on a regular basis of normal baby activity, sounds and smells. Familiarity through observation is an essential part of building the dog and baby relationship and increases safety.
  All encounters with dog and baby must include adult awake supervision.
You can do this activity with the dog on a tether or free roaming. This depends on the manners of the dog and Mom's comfort level. A highly active dog may need to be kept at a short distance away from Mom in order to not interfere with nursing. This is where tethering may come in handy.

Tether time….creating a "success station."
www.pettethers.com has great tethers of varying lengths that are durable and easy to hook up. It is best if a dog is exposed to being tethered prior to "needing" to be tethered. Tethering should be a positive experience for your dog. This is a great management tool for highly active dogs that may be pushy while Mom and baby nurse. Begin with a short tether that does not reach Mom and then gradually increase the closeness as the dog remains calm and behaves appropriately. Mom should comfortably be able to give a cue with the dog following it before allowing the dog closer. This can take days or weeks depending on the dog and Mom. Once comfortable the tether will no longer be needed.

Tethering allows the dog to observe, listen and participate from a safe distance while being rewarded with praise, treats or a toy.

Tethering is **NOT** a good choice if the dog is lunging or stressed when on the tether. Other options may be more suitable such as crating or gating. It may also be that the dog

needs to be removed from the room when Mom needs to focus on the baby and breastfeeding. The priority is for Mom and baby to be able to relax and focus on nursing.

When times are tough

Breastfeeding is wonderful but does take a lot of learning and patience in the beginning. There will be times Mom and baby become overwhelmed and stressed. When these times happen, if possible, allow your dog a quiet place to go away from the stress. This decreases the stress for both dog and Mom. Some dogs become anxious when Mom is upset and many dogs become anxious and inquisitive when the new baby is fussing. Having an alternative plan for the dog is a great solution for these times.
Options:
● Tell the dog what you want them to do…sit, down, go to your bed etc
● Have someone put the dog in another room or outside for a break
● Crate, gate or tether the dog and toss treats for calm behavior

Bringing home a newborn is an amazing time but also invites sleepless nights, new experiences and a rollercoaster of emotions. We encourage you to take your time and enjoy your baby as you develop a lifelong bond and make amazing memories. Dogs adapt well when we show them what we want in a calm and definite way. When you are feeling overwhelmed it is okay to take a break from the family dog and just enjoy focusing on your new baby. There is plenty of time ahead to build the dog and baby bond but breastfeeding must be a priority in the early days.

If you have any questions you can always contact us at 919.961.1608 or visit familypaws.com

Enjoy your new baby and happy nursing!

www.dogsandstorks.com