

## Introducing Your Pet Pig to a Newborn Baby

Nancy Shepherd

***Parenting a pet pig is certainly good practice for becoming the parents of a biological child.*** However, your only pig child may not see this addition as particularly wonderful. In fact, it's most likely that she will hate the idea of being usurped by your little bundle of joy and her cute little snout may well be out of joint. Here are some practical ways to make this transition easier for your pig.

**Training, training, training!** If your pigs do not obey the very basic commands of “here”, “sit”, “stay”, “off”, and “no”, then you have some work to do. A well-behaved pig is even more of a necessity with a youngster added to the family mix. Don't put this task off. You will have success with the method known as “clicker training” and books are available at your pet store. Or hire a personal trainer and get your piggy whipped into shape!

**Sex Change!** If you have put off having your pet pig spayed or neutered, DO SO NOW. This will definitely decrease any aggressive tendencies that an intact pig might exhibit.

**Familiarity breeds contentment!** If you plan to change your pig's quarters, do so many months before the baby arrives. If at all possible, keep your pig's usual feeding and potty routine in place. You want your pig to be settled in and comfortable with her routine and living accommodations because the introduction of a new little person will be plenty for her to adjust to.

**Play mommy!** Purchase a baby doll that is the size of a newborn. Carry your baby around, cradle it, talk to it, share it with your pig-child. Place the baby doll in the cradle and sing to it. Your pig will get used to seeing you in this new role, making the transition of you holding your real baby seem normal. If your pig acts out against the baby doll in any way, discipline her.

**Baby is coming home!** Before or very soon after you bring the baby home, give your pig an article of clothing that has the baby's scent on it. This will allow your pig to become familiar using her powerful sense of smell and will surely add to a successful introduction.

**Postpartum Pig Greeting and Introduction!** Mom or Dad: Have your spouse carry the baby inside while you shower all sorts of attention on Miss Piggy. Make her feel really important and show her how happy you are to see her after your hospital stay. Hold your newborn and ask your pig to “sit”. Gradually allow her to sniff the baby and sit nearby. You will instinctively know how far to take this first meeting. Short visits often are the best tact.

**Keep Miss Piggy Polite!** It is extremely important to be with your infant anytime your pig is in the same proximity. You can even put your pig on a lead during these getting-to-know-you sessions. This will allow you control should the need arise. Remember that Miss Piggy was your first child. It is only normal for new parents to “makeover” their new baby, but it's also important to take time to “love on” your pig. After all, the goal is to create a harmonious family, pets included.

