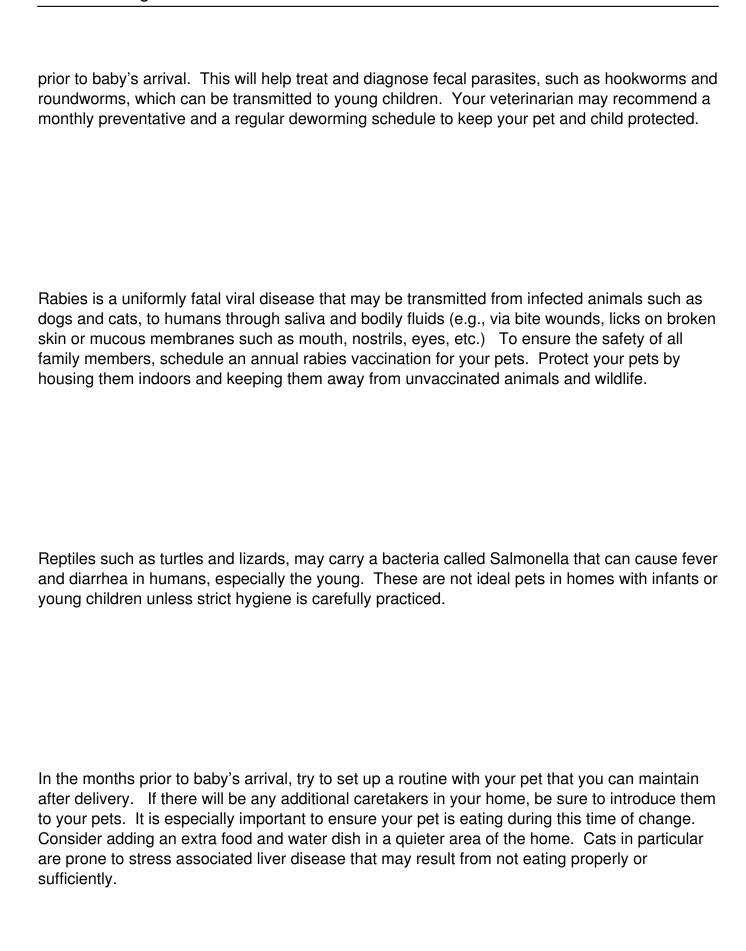
Pets and Young Children
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There are many existing myths about owning pets with young children in the home. Our concern should lie with those that are scientifically supported. These zoonotic diseases, diseases that are transmissible from animals to humans, include Toxoplasmosis, digestive parasites, Rabies, and Salmonellosis. We should also consider how to ease the transition for our four legged "fur-kids" as they adjust to the new family member and our changing routine.
Toxoplasmosis is a coccidian parasite shed in the stools of infected cats. Only the sporulated form, which develops 24 hours after a cat defecates, is contagious to humans. It is transmitted through ingestion of the parasite. To prevent human infection, we recommend scooping the litter pan daily, wearing gloves, and washing your hands thoroughly afterwards. Humans are far more likely to become infected with this parasite as a result of gardening or eating incompletely cooked meat than from their pet. Cover outdoor sand pits so that neighborhood cats won't use it as a litter pan and potentially expose your child. Cats can be evaluated for the disease through a blood test, available at the International Center for Veterinary Services.
Have your veterinarian deworm your cat or dog and analyze a stool sample in the few months



Family dogs should be introduced to young infants with caution. Consider how your pet has interacted with children in the past and plan accordingly. Keep a close eye on your dog's body language with any introduction, and use your most cautious judgment on how to proceed. We recommend supervising dogs at all times when in the presence of infants and young children.
Additional resources:
www.avma.org/animal_health/pets_ZD_faq.asp
www.cdc.gov/HEALTHYPETS/
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