

## **Growing Up With Pets Fact File: *Toddlers and Pets***

Toddlers and pets both love play time, but little tykes and furry friends don't always "play nicely." With appropriate supervision and adequate training, the whole gang can get along.

### **Talk to Your Toddler**

- Set ground rules from the start – communicate "off limits" behavior to children.
- Choose key words like "easy," "gentle" or "nice" to communicate gentle behavior.
- Practice these words with a toddler while demonstrating gentle behavior on a stuffed animal.
- Guide the toddler's hand as you stroke the stuffed animal and repeat the signal words; supervise the activity in case pets respond aggressively.
- Demonstrate inappropriate behavior to children.
- Teach toddlers how to approach a pet – ball up their fists to prevent poking.
- Don't allow children to "stare down" pets. They will get nervous and react accordingly.

### **Keep Watch**

- Never leave a child alone with a pet.
- Create separate alone time for both toddler and pet.
- Crate training offers time out for puppies and prohibits them from developing separation anxiety.

### **Puppy-Proof the House**

- Place toys, shoes and small objects away from pets' reach.
- Create barriers – this will protect the pet and the home.

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