

HERDING GROUP

Pulik

PULI AND BABY LIVING TOGETHER

In this column, I asked two Houston-area Puli owners who also are moms to share with us what their experience was with (A) introducing a new baby to an existing household with Pulik, and/or (B) introducing a new puppy *and* a new baby to an existing household with a Puli.

Some dogs whether or not they were exposed to children at an early age can be wary of children. A responsible dog breeder introduces their puppies to many and varied experiences to make their introduction to their forever homes easier. But it's really up to you, the new parent(s), to really facilitate a good introduction and relationship between Puli and your baby.

The AKC has useful information on introducing your dog to your new baby at <https://www.akc.org/expert-advice/training/introducing-dog-to-baby/> and <https://www.akcpetinsurance.com/blog/8-ways-to-prepare-your-dog-for-a-new-baby>. The American Humane Association has a downloadable free book with good tips: <https://www.americanhumane.org/publication/pet-meets-baby/>.

First, new mom Christina Solis shares her experiences (and those of her husband, Graham) with the addition of son Kanan to two Pulik, who were introduced by their

breeder as puppies to small children.

“For the arrival of Kanan, we knew we had two Pulik with very different attitudes about children. Celosa (age 13) has been a fan of small children since she was a puppy. She loves kids of all shapes and sizes (and has since she was a puppy). Before my son came along, we used to joke that we needed to have a baby for our Puli. Celosa had been known to alter her play based who she was with, slowing down for toddlers and sitting very still for babies. Fusilli (age 9) is a much more cautious fellow. Sudden movements or noises my startle him. He can be aggressive toward other dogs and has indicated that loud, quick-moving children are a cause for concern. With both of them, we knew we would have to monitor them around Kanan at all times.

Before Kanan's birth, we changed the living space to ensure that our dogs did not associate changes in the home with the baby in a negative way. These changes included new/moved furniture (and other alterations of their home). We also started



Baby Kanan contemplates Celosa the Puli; Celosa and her charge; Kanan and Fusilli; both Pulik and Kanan.

working on making strange noises and startling the dogs from time to time so that they could become somewhat accustomed to what

was to come. Still, all of the preparation is no match for the reality of bringing home a baby. “When Kanan came home, we were

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shocked to find that at first Fusilli (rather than Celosa) was much more interested in the baby. Maybe Celosa was feeling a little displaced. It could also be that a newborn isn't all that interesting compared to the other small kids Celosa has been around. Fusilli, on the other hand, stuck very close to Kanan at the beginning, and we decided that he'd sworn a blood-oath to protect him. On his first walk with the new member of the family, Fusilli refused to leave the flank of the stroller, when he usually goes to inspect every single blade of grass in the neighborhood.

"Over time (Kanan is just shy of 5 months now), the dogs' attitudes have shifted. Kanan is more interactive, and Celosa comes over to shower him in kisses from time to time. She also is more likely to be by his side, stationing herself under him (especially if he is with one of us). Fusilli is still protective of Kanan in the abstract, but he also steers clear whenever there is a loud sound (crying) or sounds he can't understand (the ridiculous noises his parents make in singing or otherwise interacting with the baby).

"Neither Puli is ever unsupervised around the baby. One of the two of us is nearby at all times to monitor the interaction and pull them away if it gets to be too much for any of them. As he's grown older Kanan is more aware of the Pulis, and he's reached for their cords a

few times. So long as he's not pulling and the Puli is not upset, we will let him hold them for a short while. Most of the time they do not notice, usually because Celosa is too busy kissing his leg or hand or top of his head.

"While the first few months were pretty hectic, we have done our best to go back to old routines. Fusilli has a short walk in the morning with just me (and sometimes Kanan in a carrier). The whole family has a nighttime walk after dinner. Everyone has one-on-one time with each other, without the baby, but we also are working to establish new, fun routines *with* Kanan, so he is associated with good things rather than a total disruption of their lives. The Pulik now get excited when they see Kanan's carrier being pulled out, because it's very likely that their leashes will come out too.

"We are all still learning how to be a Puli family with a little one, and so far everything has gone well. We are embarking on new territory, though, since Kanan is starting to move on his own. When he's independently crawling, walking, running, we will need to watch very carefully how the Pulik react and we will have to put up boundaries, both physical and through training, to ensure everyone remains safe."—C.S.

It is a two-fold challenge to not only have a new baby in the home *but* to also introduce a new puppy at that same time. Tracy Finn

shares her perspective (and that of her husband Kelly) with a puppy also introduced by my mom to small children previously:

"It may seem crazy to bring home a new baby and a puppy a week apart. We didn't really plan it that way. We would have had a few weeks alone with Boris to focus on potty training and snuggles, but our first daughter came early. Instead, our 1-week-old Dagny made the trek with us for puppy pickup.

"The biggest challenge was potty training. Living in a townhouse, we didn't have a yard. Going outside meant walks on leashes. As a new mom, after dad went back to work, I remember asking myself, 'Can I leave a baby asleep in the pack and play on the second floor and walk outside with the puppy? Is this even legal?' What can I say? When you haven't slept in days, you start questioning everything. We relied heavily on puppy pee pads during that time.

"Our older Puli, Natasha, was 8 years old at the time. She had a personality that could best be described as diva-drama queen-evil genius. In the best possible way!

We worried a little that her feisty personality would not be accepting of a tiny human, but she fluctuated between oblivious and protective. I expected a little jealousy since she had a habit of emitted a low gentle growl when people would stop petting her. But we saw none

of that. Natasha still understood that she was the master of the house, so all was well.

"Meanwhile, Boris developed the sweetest, most patient demeanor. To this day, he still sits quietly next to his bowl when he needs a refill. He just looks at us as if to say, 'If it's not too much trouble, when you get a chance, I'd like some more please. No rush!' Of course, it's impossible to know if he developed that trait as a result of be raised alongside a newborn or if it is part of his nature, but he is the most 'lovey' of the three Pulik we've had.

"Can you have a newborn and a puppy at the same time? Absolutely! Ideally, getting those first few weeks of potty training out of the way first would definitely help your stress levels and floors, though."—T.F.

The before examples are Puli owners and moms who have shown great wisdom and common sense in how they handled bringing children into the lives of their Pulik. To recap:

Before your baby comes home:

Change your pet's environment gradually

Create barriers to areas of the home

Prepare your pet for baby sounds

Prepare the pet for baby smells

Start training when you know your baby is on its way (you have 9 months of pregnancy to prepare for your new arrival)

After your baby comes home:

Try to keep your pet's schedule intact

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Always supervise and be vigilant. This is especially important when kids are learning to walk or crawl around dogs, because even the most patient dog can become stressed with little humans who don't understand that grabbing and pulling isn't acceptable.

Show love to your pet(s) and make time for them. If you have multiple pets, individual attention is key.

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Puli Club of America

Spanish Water Dogs

ESSENTIAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SWD

The Spanish Water Dog Club of America continues to do ongoing judges' education, and significant elements of our judges' presentation seem to be logical "fodder" for this column.

As foundation information early in the presentation, we describe the "essential characteristics" of the breed—that is, traits that we would want to see present in any dog being considered for recognition in the ring and in a breeding program.

Distinctive rustic coat

The breed's coat has been addressed in previous columns, but it continues to require emphasis for many judges and others new to the breed. The term "rustic" *cannot* be over-emphasized; aesthetic brushing, grooming/scissoring is always incorrect and should not be rewarded in the ring. While wide variation in coat length is very acceptable, the tips of the curls, no matter their length, should show a thin "fishhook-like" curl. Correct cords, not more than 6 or 7 inches in length, are never flat but are rather pencil-like in diameter, with the curl of the coat evident throughout the length of the cord and then tapering to the tip.

Medium-sized, moderate in all ways

The versatility of this breed, both now and historically in the country of origin, demands a hardy dog of medium size with considerable stamina. Due to variations between early dogs in the north and south of Spain, the standard does allow for quite a broad range in height. With correct proportions (see below) and the solid build of a good specimen, dogs who are much beyond the maximum height will become cumbersome and lack the nimble and surefooted ability required to manage goats on uneven terrain. (More than one judge has commented on the importance of not "growing" this breed.) Conversely, dogs lacking sub-



Spanish Water Dog: AKC Meet the Breeds

stance would not be able to fulfill all of their duties, particularly in the water and retrieving game. Moderation in build as well as in angulation and stride are necessary for maintaining the pace of a steady day of moving stock

along roads to seasonal pasture.

Slightly longer than tall (9:8); 50 percent body, 50 percent leg

Because of the variation that will appear