

Volunteering - Keeping Safe

Pregnancy and new mothers in dog related roles

We ask you to please inform your Guide Dogs manager when you are pregnant, have given birth within the last 6 months or are breast feeding.

Potential harms

- Hormonal changes during and shortly after pregnancy can soften ligaments which increases the risk of musculoskeletal injuries during manual handling activities
- Some parasite control substances have chemicals that can cause harm to an unborn child
- New and expectant mothers can be vulnerable to stress because of the hormonal, psychological and physiological changes that occur during pregnancy

Best practice and controls

You should discuss your volunteering role activities with your Doctor/Midwife to seek their advice if you develop any health issues.

Movement, posture and lifting

- Correct positioning and handling of a dog is very important so you should always follow the handling advice and use equipment you have been provided with
- If at any point you find it difficult to control/handle the dog or have concerns about the dog's control/handling speak to your Guide Dogs manager
- Do not lift dogs, large sacks of food or other large dog equipment - always ask for assistance from another person

Hazardous substances

- It is important that you read the safety guidance provided with any item you are required to administer to your dog

- You should not apply ectoparasite (flea) control or touch the dog near the application area due to toxicity of substance. Always ask another person to apply this for you
- If you are required to administer any medication or treatment to your dog, please advise the Vet/Guide Dogs contact that you are pregnant
- Always follow best practice hygiene measures

Stress

New and expectant mothers can be vulnerable to stress because of the hormonal, psychological and physiological changes that occur during pregnancy. If you have any concerns or worries about the dog or your related activities, please speak with your Guide Dogs manager.

Following the birth of a baby

- There is always a possibility that the dog may experience jealousy. It is advisable that any dog is introduced to the new baby gradually
- Never leave a baby unattended with the dog
- Report to your Guide Dogs manager any new habits or behaviours displayed by the dog that may be a concern following the birth of baby e.g. licking the baby, pinching baby's toys, jumping up near the cot/baby carrier or pram

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