



Thumper 294169: What to Expect

Thumper is a graduate of the Behavior Modification Program and needs a special home. Thumper is a sweet, playful boy once he gets to know a person, but he will be scared at first. Patience and time are the best things for him as he acclimates to new people and places.

Thumper was transferred from another shelter, and we do not have much history on him. When he arrived at the shelter he displayed fearful behavior, crouching low, hiding, and hissing when staff attempted to engage with him. He was also diagnosed with Ringworm, which meant he had to be isolated and receive daily medications and twice weekly baths for 6 weeks before being deemed free of Ringworm. Though the team did a great job at treating him, the medical style handling coupled with his already shy behavior was not conducive to helping him thrive in the shelter environment. After he received his Ringworm treatment, it was decided to place him in the Behavior Modification program to allow time for him to acclimate and work with him on his fearful behavior towards people.

We found early on that Thumper responds well to verbal encouragement. Sitting near him, speaking softly, and offering slow eye blinks gave Thumper the confidence needed to trust us. We would also offer him treats, specifically Churus which he loves, and this helped him feel even more comfortable in our presence. Overtime, as his confidence and trust with the team grew, he would allow us to pet his cheek, chin, and head. Once he knows he can trust someone, he leans in for attention and has the best purr motor. As we continued to build a relationship with Thumper, it became obvious how much he loved other cats. Being around other cats helped him become even more comfortable with people. He loves to cuddle up next to his cat friends and take naps with them, as well as pouncing and chasing toys with them. Because of this, Thumper will need to go home where he can have a cat friend. Thumper also loves to play with toys. He'll watch wand toys as they soar through the air and then pounce on them with great delight. Thumper continues to startle easily and will need a family that is committed to helping him become even more confident in his new home. He does not appreciate loud, chaotic environments and will hide if he is feeling overwhelmed. He will do best in a calm environment, one where he can be given plenty of time to acclimate to a new environment.

His new family should expect that he will hide for a few weeks, possibly longer. You'll need to introduce him to new things slowly. Thumper typically flees and hides when overwhelmed or scared. If cornered, he will hiss, cower, swat, and potentially bite so it's important to not overwhelm him as he adjusts to his new home. It's important to provide him with a small room with appropriate hiding spots for him to relax in, such as his own hidey bed. Hiding spots that are confined to a tight spot and out of reach from you will make it difficult to build a bond with him. **He should not be given access to the whole home setting until he has acclimated to one room. The room you set him up in will be the catalyst for how quickly he acclimates.** Start thinking now which room in your home would be best for Thumper to settle into. If it's a bedroom, can he get under the bed or dresser making it difficult to spend time with him? If it's a laundry room or bathroom will the constant in and out of people and noises associated with these rooms be too much for him? By having a room without a lot of foot traffic and with appropriate hiding spots, it will allow you to work on building a relationship. While in his hiding spot, use calm voices and offer tasty treats to show you are not a threat. Place a small amount of a wet food or a treat on a spoon and offer it to Thumper while in his hidey spot. Or toss him a few crunchy treats. Bring the laser pointer or wand toy out and allow him to observe and engage with it. Over time, by continuing to do this, Thumper will become more comfortable and recognize that yummy food/playtime = people, therefore creating a positive association between the two.

Here's how to help Thumper during your first months together:

This step is crucial in helping Thumper acclimate to his new home. Confine Thumper to one cat-proof room in your house. Provide Thumper with a litter box, food, water, and a bed. Ensure he cannot get to *inappropriate* hiding spots (under the bed, in a closet, on top of a cabinet, etc.). Provide him with a safe, comfortable hiding place instead like his cat carrier, a hidey-bed, or a large dog crate covered with a blanket.

Spend time with Thumper in her room. Don't force him out of his hiding spot. Instead, encourage him to come out on his own using happy talk, offering treats or toys. Once he is using the litter box, eating regularly, and coming out of hiding to interact with you, you can start introducing him to the rest of your home. Start by propping the door open and allowing him to come out on his own. Don't force it! If you come across something that you can tell Thumper is worried about, allow him to hang back or hide if he chooses to do so.

Continue to provide a safe space. Even when Thumper has started exploring the rest of the house, give him a safe space that he can retreat to. When he is in his safe space, insist that guests leave him alone and try to ignore him yourself. That way, when he comes out, you can reward his bravery with your attention.

No visitors (at first). Allow Thumper time to adjust to your house, routine, and lifestyle before introducing him to new people. When you have visitors over, give Thumper the freedom to make the decision to interact (or not!). Ask new people to ignore him – or if Thumper seems curious or interested, have the new person toss him treats or offer a favorite toy. We want exciting, good things to come from new people.

Practice crate training. Leave his carrier out all the time, so it's just a part of his normal environment. Add a bed and keep the door securely propped open so he can go in and out on his own, making sure the door won't swing shut and frighten him. You can also clicker train him to run into the carrier on cue. Helping Thumper get comfortable with his carrier will make it easier when it's time to visit the vet.

Visiting the vet: Unless it's an emergency, give Thumper time to bond to you before taking him to the vet. Vet visits will more than likely be scary, but if he already trusts you, your presence may help him feel more comfortable.

Patience will come in handy for you. Thumper is a cat that needs an understanding owner who has the time and desire to allow him to adapt in his own time. He may never be a social butterfly, and that's okay! Getting to know him and watching him come out of his shell will be extremely rewarding. Celebrate those small victories.

We're here to help!

We want Thumper to be successful in her new home. We're available to answer questions via phone and email. Call the Behavior Helpline at (503)416-2983 or email Erika at erikas@oregonhumane.org to connect with the Feline Services Manager.

Please keep in touch so we can continue to help you and Thumper now and in the future. Please reach out if you have any questions or concerns – or just to give an update. We love to see photos and hear how our friends are doing!

Thank you for adopting from the Oregon Humane Society. Congratulations on your new cat!