



Carmel 69262: What to Expect

Carmel is a graduate of the Behavior Modification Program and needs a special home. Carmel is an independent girl who likes attention on her own terms. She enjoys being around people and is happy to observe what's going on but isn't a fan of being smothered with attention. She has a history of being nervous with new people/places and will need time to acclimate to her new home. Carmel will do best in an adult only home as the only pet.

Carmel was adopted from OHS as a kitten but recently brought back due to a lifestyle change with her family. In her previous home, her family described her as being an affectionate lap kitty at times but will let you know when she wants to be left alone. She loves scratching on her cardboard scratcher, catnip, bird watching and napping. When she arrived at OHS, she was very cautious and weary of all the new people, noises, and environment. Her whole world had been turned upside down after being with her previous family for 15 years so you can imagine it was all overwhelming for her. She would growl, hiss and swat if we got too close to her. She was placed in the Behavior Modification program where we could work on learning more about her and help her acclimate to all the changes she was experiencing.

Carmel is very good at communicating when she is nervous. As she acclimated to the BMOD program she would regularly growl and hiss at us when we spent time with her in her suite. We would sit calmly in her suite, talking softly and offering slow eye blinks. As time went on, Carmel began to trust us more and the defensive behavior she displayed diminished. Her body language began to relax, and she would regularly perch on her cat tower napping in the sun. She also started accepting treats when we would offer them to her. Carmel is the one that has to decide if she wants to interact or not. When she is in the mood, she will meow at us for attention and when we offer our hand, she will decide to either come forward or walk away. When she does allow pets, it is typically only for a short period of time before she decides she is done. Carmel is a lady that knows what's she wants and isn't afraid to tell you. Carmel will do best as the only pet in an adult only home and with someone experienced in feline body language.

Here's how to help Carmel during your first month together:

This step is crucial in helping Carmel acclimate to her new home. Confine Carmel to one cat-proof room in your house. Provide Carmel with a litter box, food, water, and a bed. Ensure she cannot get to *inappropriate* hiding spots (under the bed, in a closet, on top of a cabinet, etc.). Provide her with a safe, comfortable hiding place instead like her cat carrier, a hidey-bed, or a large dog crate covered with a blanket. Once she is using the litter box, eating regularly, and coming out of hiding to play with toys, you can start introducing her to the rest of your home.

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

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

No visitors (at first). Allow Carmel time to adjust to your house, routine, and lifestyle before introducing her to new people. When you have visitors over, give Carmel the freedom to make the decision to interact (or not!). Ask new

people to ignore her – or if Carmel seems curious or interested, have the new person toss her treats or offer a favorite toy. We want exciting, good things to come from new people.

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

Visiting the vet: Unless it's an emergency, give Carmel time to bond to you before taking her to the vet. Vet visits will more than likely be scary, but if she already trusts you, your presence may help her feel more comfortable. Patience will come in handy for you.

Patience will come in handy for you. Carmel is a cat that needs an understanding owner who has the time and desire to allow her to adapt in her own time. She may never be a social butterfly with everyone she meets but she will bond with her new family. Getting to know her and watching her come out of her shell will be extremely rewarding. Celebrate those small victories.

We're here to help!

We want Carmel 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 Carmel 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!