



Audrey 302329: What to Expect

Audrey is a graduate of the Behavior Modification Program and needs a special home. Audrey is a shy, sensitive, sweet girl who is ready to find her forever home. Audrey needs an understanding owner that is experienced with feline body language and has the time and desire to allow her to acclimate in her own time. Audrey may never be a social butterfly with everyone she meets, but she will bond with someone when given the time she needs to get to know you.

Audrey was transferred from another shelter and was one of 6 kittens born in May 2023. The shelter took them in and worked on socializing them all as the momma cat was very fearful of people and protective of her kittens. Audrey was then transferred to OHS for adoption in March of this year. When she first arrived, she displayed fearful, shy behavior and was avoidant of being pet. After several weeks with no change in her behavior, she was placed in the Behavior Modification Program. The environment in the BMOD program is more conducive to helping cats feel comfortable in a shelter environment. With the larger kennel space, access to windows, and increased one on one time with the team we set out to learn more about her and help her overcome her fears.

When she first arrived in the Behavior Modification program Audrey would continuously hide and cower in her hidey bed. Audrey has never shown aggressive behavior towards people, but rather goes into flight or freeze mode when she is scared. We worked on building trust and confidence by talking to her calmly and getting her used to our presence. We would offer her treats and worked on building positive associations with people by not forcing any interactions on her. Overtime we could see her body begin to relax and she would regularly hop off her cat tower throughout the day to eat, drink and use the litterbox. She continued to be fearful of people approaching (would slink back and cower her head) but as we built trust with her, she started tolerating being pet. Overtime, she started enjoying being pet as we would tell her how pretty she was. Every time we pet her, we would always pair the interaction with treats to continue building positive associations with people. Audrey is still working on being confident and comfortable with people and will need an experienced, calm, and patient person to help her with her progress. Audrey may never be a social butterfly, but she does enjoy being around people. She's happy to observe the world around her, being close by people but isn't overly affectionate or needy. Audrey has lived with cats in the past and currently shares a larger space with other cats here. She is regularly seen snuggling and cuddling with the other cats. She would do fine with another kitty that is happy to just relax and hang out and not one that wants to rough and tumble play with her.

Her new family should expect that she will hide for a few weeks, possibly longer. You'll need to introduce her to new things slowly. Audrey typically flees, hides, and cowers when overwhelmed or scared. It's important to provide her with a small room with appropriate hiding spots for her to relax in, such as her 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 her. **She should not be given access to the whole home setting until she has acclimated to one room. The room you set her up in will be the catalyst for how quickly she acclimates.** Start thinking now which room in your home would be best for Audrey to settle into. If it's a bedroom, can she get under the bed or dresser making it difficult to spend time with her? 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 her? 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 her hiding spot, use calm voices and offer tasty treats to show you are not a threat. Place a small amount of wet food or a treat on a spoon and offer it to Audrey while in her hidey spot. Or toss her a few crunchy treats. Over time, by continuing to do this, Audrey will become more comfortable and recognize that yummy food = people, therefore creating a positive association between the two.

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

This step is crucial in helping Audrey acclimate to her new home. Confine Audrey to one cat-proof room in your house. Provide Audrey 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.

Spend time with Audrey 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 toy or treats. 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 Audrey is worried about, allow her to hang back or hide if she chooses to do so.

Continue to provide a safe space. Even when Audrey 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 Audrey time to adjust to your house, routine, and lifestyle before introducing her to new people. When you have visitors over, give Audrey the freedom to make the decision to interact (or not!). Ask new people to ignore her – or if Audrey 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 Audrey 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 Audrey 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. Audrey 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, and that's okay! 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 Audrey 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 Behavior Modification Manager.

Please keep in touch so we can continue to help you and Audrey 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!