



Fluffy 303770: What to Expect

Fluffy is a graduate of the Behavior Modification Program and needs a special home. Fluffy is a sweet girl who is ready to find her forever home. Fluffy needs a family that has the time and desire to allow her to acclimate in her own time. Once she feels comfortable and knows she is safe, she is very social, engaging and loves attention. Fluffy will bond with her new family when given the time she needs to acclimate.

Fluffy came to OHS from the home of an overwhelmed cat caregiver. Fluffy never showed aggressive behavior towards people, but it was clear that the busy, chaotic shelter environment was overwhelming for her. 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 more 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 BMOD she would hide in her hidey bed, only coming out to eat or use the Litterbox. During this time, we would sit in her kennel and calmly talk to her and offer slow eye blinks. Over time, she stopped hiding in her bed and started hanging out on her cat tower. We would continue to talk to her and offering treats at every visit. At first, she wouldn't eat the treats we offered until after we left her kennel, but after some time she started eating them in front of us. Her body language began to relax even more, and she started to show an interest in being pet. Once we started petting her, she couldn't get enough of it. She now leans in, rolls around, headbutts and does elevator butt while being pet. She regularly engages with the staff now, climbing off her cat tower to be pet, purring, and to eat treats. Her favorite treats are Temptation treats. She came from a home where there were many cats, and she may do ok with another kitty that is happy to just relax and chill with her. She enjoys spending time with the human friends she has made here and being pet. What Fluffy needed was time to build trust and confidence with people in a calm environment and we are looking for a family that can help her transition into a new home with the same love and patience.

Fluffy continues to be worried when loud and/or sudden movements occur. In these moments she will run and hide but easily recovers with gentle calming voices. Once a bond and relationship are formed with people, she will lean in for pets and headbutt to show her affection. Her favorite activities are eating treats, being pet, watching wildlife out the window, and relaxing in the best sunspots.

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. Fluffy typically flees and hides when overwhelmed or scared. If cornered, she may hiss, cower, and swat so it's important to not overwhelm her as she adjusts to her new home. 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 Fluffy 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 a wet food or a treat on a spoon and offer it to Fluffy while in her hidey spot. Or toss her a few crunchy treats. Bring the laser pointer or wand toy out and allow her to observe and engage with it. Over time, by continuing to do this, Fluffy will become more comfortable and recognize that yummy food/playtime = people, therefore creating a positive association between the two.

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

Confine Fluffy to one cat-proof room in your house. Provide Fluffy 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 Fluffy 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 Fluffy is worried about, allow her to hang back or hide if she chooses to do so.

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