



## Mizu 306108: What to Expect

**Mizu is a graduate of the Behavior Modification Program and needs a special home.** Mizu is a sweet, playful girl who is ready to find her forever home. Mizu 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. Mizu will bond with her new family when given the time she needs to acclimate.

Mizu was surrendered to OHS from a hoarding situation. When she arrived, she displayed fearful behavior, hiding, cowering and frozen with fear. Mizu never showed aggressive behavior towards people, but it was clear that the busy, chaotic shelter environment was overwhelming for her. After 2 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 perch on her cat tower and observe the team as we moved around the space. We would sit in her kennel and calmly talk to her and offer slow eye blinks. We would offer her tasty treats which she readily accepted to build a positive association with people. Over time, she began to show relaxed body language and began rolling around on her cat perch and making biscuits in the air at us. She has the most amazing mitten paws as she is polydactyl. She quickly showed an interest in playing with toys when we offered them to her. She loves wand toys, and will track them through the air, then chase and pounce on them with great delight. She also loves other cats. We allowed her to have playdates with several other kitties in the program and being around other cats has helped her flourish even more. Because she loves other cats so much, she was moved into the Sunroom which is a communal cat room where she could be around other cats 24/7. She is nervous with hands approaching her face and head but is much more receptive to being pet on her back. When her human friends are petting her, she will roll around and has the best elevator butt. Her new family should expect to continue working with her on touch as it will take time for her to build trust and confidence with new people. The BMOD program has helped Mizu flourish, and what she needed was time to build trust and confidence with people in a calm environment. We are looking for a family that can help her transition into a new home with the same love and patience.

Mizu 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 to show her affection. Her favorite activities are playing with toys, eating treats, and relaxing in the best sunspots. Other cats have been crucial in helping her feel comfortable. Mizu will need to find a home where there is another cat for her to have as a friend.

**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. Mizu 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 Mizu 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 Mizu 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, Mizu will become more comfortable and recognize that yummy food/playtime = people, therefore creating a positive association between the two.

### **Here's how to help Mizu during your first months together:**

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

**Continue to provide a safe space.** Even when Mizu 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 Mizu time to adjust to your house, routine, and lifestyle before introducing her to new people. When you have visitors over, give Mizu the freedom to make the decision to interact (or not!). Ask new people to ignore her – or if Mizu 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 Mizu 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 Mizu 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. Mizu 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 Mizu 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](mailto:erikas@oregonhumane.org) to connect with the Feline Behavior Modification Manager.

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