



Audrey 194842: What to Expect

Audrey is a graduate of the Behavior Modification Program and needs a special home. Audrey is a shy but sweet girl who 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 social, engaging and loves being pet. Audrey will bond with her new family when given the time she needs to acclimate.

Audrey was surrendered to OHS due to her previous family moving and they were unable to take her with them. In her previous home she was described as being very shy but sweet with her family, who was scared of loud noises and visitors. She spent most of her time lounging throughout the day, and would engage with her family in the evenings, rubbing on legs and soliciting attention. Any time there was a loud noise or fast movements, Audrey would run and hide. Because we knew Audrey had a shy personality, we wanted to make her stay at the shelter as positive as possible. On the day she arrived, 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.

Audrey was very nervous for the first few weeks and spent most of her time hiding in her bed. She wouldn't come out to engage with us but instead would stare at us wide eyed with a worried look. In the beginning, we would sit calmly in her kennel, sweet talk to her and offer slow eye blinks and overtime her body language began to relax. We would offer our hand for her to sniff, and she would lean forward as if to say it was ok. Soon, she was allowing and enjoying cheek and chin scratches, leaning into the touch, purring and kneading. As Audrey learned we were not a threat she started venturing out of her hidey bed to engage with us. Rubbing on our legs and headbutting us. We also found out that she loves to be brushed and would let us brush her over and over again while she purred from happiness.

Audrey is happiest curled up in a warm bed but is always receptive to when we visit her in her kennel for pets. She will also bat at wand toys on occasion when the mood strikes her. She continues to startle easily when a loud noise occurs, but she recovers quickly with verbal encouragement and slow movements. Audrey has met several kitties here and doesn't seem bothered by them. She may do ok with another kitty that is happy to relax and lounge around and not one that wants to rough and tumble play with her. Audrey will do best in a calm, quiet home with someone that is patient with her as she adjusts to her new home.

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 runs and hides when overwhelmed or scared, 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 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 a 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. Bring the laser pointer or wand toy out and allow her to observe and engage with it. Over time, by continuing to do this, Audrey will become more comfortable and recognize that yummy food/playtime = people, therefore creating a positive association between the two.

Here's how to help Audrey during your first month 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. 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 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 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 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.

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 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 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!