



Luna 316909: What to Expect

Luna is a graduate of the Behavior Modification Program and needs a special home. Luna is a shy, but sweet girl once she gets to know a person, but she will be scared at first. Patience and time are the best thing for her as she acclimates to new people and places.

Luna was a transfer from another shelter, and we don't have much history on her. When Luna arrived at OHS, she displayed fearful behavior, crouching low, hiding, hissing, and swatting when staff attempted to engage with her. After several days with no change in her behavior the decision was made to place her in our 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 in BMOD, access to windows, and increased one on one time with the team we set out to learn more about her and help her overcome his fears.

We worked on building trust and confidence by talking to her calmly, offering treats and getting her used to our presence by sitting close by her. She showed an interest in toys and we would use these toys to build a positive association with people. As we soared the wand toy through the air, she would watch, chase and pounce on it with great delight. We also paired every interaction we had with her with treats. Churus are her favorite, and by offering her the treats she started to understand we were not a threat. Even though she was playing with toys and taking treats when offered, she continued to be weary of touch and would hiss or run any time we attempted to pet her. Overtime, this fear dissipated, and she now allows and enjoys cheek and chin scratches. She also allows us to pick her up and snuggle her now that she trusts us. What Luna needed was time to observe and build trust with the staff, and now that she knows we are her friends, she is sweet and social with us. Luna continues to have moments where she is scared and may hiss if we approach her too quickly, but she never follows through with anything. We know that with ongoing patience and time, her fearful behavior will continue to diminish. Luna has met several other kitties here and enjoys their company. Luna would do best in a home with a cat friend, one that is happy to relax and hand 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. Luna typically flees and hides when overwhelmed or scared. If cornered, she will 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 Luna 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 Luna 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, Luna will become more comfortable and recognize that yummy food/playtime = people, therefore creating a positive association between the two.

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

This step is crucial in helping Luna acclimate to her new home. Confine Luna to one cat-proof room in your house. Provide Luna 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 Luna 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 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 Luna is worried about, allow her to hang back or hide if she chooses to do so.

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