



Spam 280130: What to Expect

Spam is a graduate of the Behavior Modification Program and needs a special home. Spam is a sweet, playful girl once she gets to know a person, but she will be scared at first. Spam needs a quiet home with a patient, calm person. She would not do well in a home with a lot of hustle and bustle, and we are unsure if she has lived with cats, dogs, or kids in the past.

You'll need to introduce her to new things slowly as it will take her time to become comfortable with her new surroundings. When Spam first arrived at OHS, she displayed defensive behaviors in her kennel. Hiding, crouching low, and darting when staff attempted to handle her. During her time in the BMOD program Spam has flourished. We spent time getting to know her, building trust, and not overwhelming her with too much activity. As she began to trust the team, she has shown us how much she loves to play with wand toys. She now playfully races around the room, chasing after toys, climbing scratching posts and finding the coziest spots to nap in. She is still a hesitant about being handled and may move away if you approach her too quickly. Spam will need a family that has the time and patience to commit to helping her come out of her shell even more.

Spam may hide, hiss, growl, swat or even bite if you try to pet or handle her before she is comfortable. You'll need to develop a relationship with her before attempting to pet her or trying to pick her up. Use treats and play time with interactive toys (like feather toys) to help build trust.

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

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

Continue to provide a safe space. Even when Spam 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 bravely with your attention.

No visitors (at first). Allow Spam time to adjust to your house, routine, and lifestyle before introducing her to new people. When you have visitors over, give Spam the freedom to make the decision to interact (or not!). Ask new people to ignore her – or if Spam 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 Spam 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 Spam 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. Spam 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 Spam 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 Services Manager.

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