



Billy 300048: What to Expect

Billy is a graduate of the Behavior Modification Program and needs a special home. Billy is a sensitive, playful boy who is ready to find his forever home. Billy needs an understanding owner that is experienced with feline body language and has the time and desire to allow him to acclimate in his own time. Billy may never be a social butterfly with everyone he meets, but he will bond with someone when given the time he needs to get to know you.

Billy was transferred from another shelter, and we do not have much history on him. When he arrived at the shelter he displayed fearful behavior, crouching low, hiding, and hissing when staff attempted to engage with him. He was also diagnosed with an Upper Respiratory Infection and Ringworm, which meant he had to be isolated and receive daily medications and twice weekly baths to treat the Ringworm for 6 weeks before being medically cleared. Though the team did a great job at treating him, the medical style handling coupled with his already shy behavior was not conducive to helping him thrive in the shelter environment. After he received his Ringworm treatment, it was decided to place him in the Behavior Modification program to allow time for him to acclimate and work with him on his fearful behavior towards people.

Billy acclimated very quickly to the Behavior Modification Program. The quieter atmosphere, larger kennel space and a window to look out of helped him feel more comfortable in his environment. In the beginning, we did a lot of hands-off playtime with him as he associated hands approaching him with receiving medical treatment. We would soar wand toys through the air, and he would watch, chase and pounce on them with great delight. He has the ability to jump very high when catching the toys in the air, it's quite impressive! He also loves to watch bird videos. As he started to feel more comfortable, he started soliciting attention by leaning in for cheek and chin scratches. He now allows full body pets when happy and relaxed and regularly asks to come out of his kennel to play with us. Billy has met several other cats here in BMOD and loves to engage and interact with them. He may enjoy having a feline companion to play with in his new home.

His new family should expect that he will hide for a few weeks, possibly longer. You'll need to introduce him to new things slowly. Billy typically runs, hides, and cowers when overwhelmed or scared. It's important to provide him with a small room with appropriate hiding spots for him to relax in, such as his 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 him. The room you set him up in will be the catalyst for how quickly he acclimates. Start thinking now which room in your home would be best for Billy to settle into. If it's a bedroom, can he get under the bed or dresser making it difficult to spend time with him? 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 him? 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 his hiding spot, use calm voices and offer tasty treats and toys 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 Billy while in his hidey spot. Over time, by continuing to do this, Billy will become more comfortable and recognize that yummy food/playtime = people, therefore creating a positive association between the two.

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

This step is crucial in helping Billy acclimate to his new home. Confine Billy to one cat-proof room in your house. Provide Billy with a litter box, food, water, and a bed. Ensure he cannot get to *inappropriate* hiding spots (under the bed, in a closet, on top of a cabinet, etc.). Provide him with a safe, comfortable hiding place instead like his cat carrier, a hidey-bed, or a large dog crate covered with a blanket.

Spend time with Billy in his room. Don't force him out of his hiding spot. Instead, encourage him to come out on his own using happy talk, offering a toy or treats. Once he is using the litter box, eating regularly, and coming out of hiding to interact with you, you can start introducing him to the rest of your home. Start by propping the door open and allowing him to come out on his own. Don't force it! If you come across something that you can tell Billy is worried about, allow him to hang back or hide if he chooses to do so.

Continue to provide a safe space. Even when Billy has started exploring the rest of the house, give him a safe space that he can retreat to. When he is in his safe space, insist that guests leave him alone and try to ignore him yourself. That way, when he comes out, you can reward his bravery with your attention.

No visitors (at first). Allow Billy time to adjust to your house, routine, and lifestyle before introducing him to new people. When you have visitors over, give Billy the freedom to make the decision to interact (or not!). Ask new people to ignore him – or if Billy seems curious or interested, have the new person toss him treats or offer a favorite toy. We want exciting, good things to come from new people.

Practice crate training. Leave his carrier out all the time, so it's just a part of his normal environment. Add a bed and keep the door securely propped open so he can go in and out on his own, making sure the door won't swing shut and frighten him. You can also clicker train him to run into the carrier on cue. Helping Billy get comfortable with his carrier will make it easier when it's time to visit the vet.

Visiting the vet: Unless it's an emergency, give Billy time to bond to you before taking him to the vet. Vet visits will more than likely be scary, but if he already trusts you, your presence may help him feel more comfortable.

Patience will come in handy for you. Billy is a cat that needs an understanding owner who has the time and desire to allow him to adapt in his own time. He may never be a social butterfly, and that's okay! Getting to know him and watching him come out of his shell will be extremely rewarding. Celebrate those small victories.

We're here to help!

We want Billy to be successful in his 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 Billy 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!