



## Emerald 302693: What to Expect

**Emerald is a graduate of the Behavior Modification Program and needs a special home.** Emerald is a shy, sweet boy who is ready to find his forever home. Emerald 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. Emerald may never be a social butterfly with everyone he meets, but he will bond with his new family when given the time he needs to acclimate.

Emerald was transferred from another shelter all the way from Texas, so we don't have much history on him. When he first arrived, he displayed fearful behavior in his kennel, hiding under his blanket and cowering. Emerald never showed aggressive behavior towards people, but it was clear that the shelter environment was overwhelming for him. He also became sick with an Upper Respiratory Infection and while the team did a great job at treating him, the medical style handling coupled with his already fearful behavior was not conducive to helping him thrive. It was then decided to place him in the Behavior Modification Program. This program would allow us to work with him on his fearful behavior and help him recover from URI.

We found early on that Emerald responds well to verbal encouragement. Sitting near him, speaking softly, and offering slow eye blinks gave Emerald the confidence needed to trust us. He also loves treats and we used treats to build a positive association between people and food. Overtime, we encouraged him to come out of hiding using calm voices and tasty treats. As he started to trust us more, his body began to relax and he started leaning in for cheek and chin scratches. Now he can't seem to get enough of attention! When he is happy, he likes to roll around, headbutt and lean in for more pets. Emerald has met several other kitties here and done well with them. He may enjoy having a feline friend in his new home.

Emerald continues to be worried when loud and/or sudden movements occur. In these moments he will run and hide but easily recovers with gentle calming voices. Once a bond and relationship are formed with people, he will lean in for pets and headbutt to show his affection. His favorite activities are playing with toys, eating treats, and relaxing in the best sunspots.

**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. Emerald typically flees and hides when overwhelmed or scared. If cornered, he may hiss, cower, and swat so it's important to not overwhelm him as he adjusts to his new home. 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. **He should not be given access to the whole home setting until he has acclimated to one room. 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 Emerald 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 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 Emerald while in his hidey spot. Or toss him a few crunchy treats. Bring the laser pointer or wand toy out and allow him to observe and engage with it. Over time, by continuing to do this, Emerald will become more comfortable and recognize that yummy food/playtime = people, therefore creating a positive association between the two.

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

**This step is crucial in helping Emerald acclimate to his new home. Confine Emerald to one cat-proof room in your house.** Provide Emerald 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 Emerald 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 Touch Tool, treats or toys. 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 Emerald is worried about, allow him to hang back or hide if he chooses to do so.

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

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