



## Honeydew 301663: What to Expect

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

Honeydew was transferred to the OHS Salem campus from another shelter, and we do not have much history on her. When she arrived at the shelter she displayed fearful behavior, crouching low, hiding, and hissing when staff attempted to engage with her. After several weeks at the Salem campus with no change in her behavior, she was transferred to the OHS Portland campus to join 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 more one on one time with the team we set out to learn more about her and help her overcome her fears.

When she first arrived in the Behavior Modification program, Honeydew hid for several days and would hiss when we approached her. We worked on building trust and confidence by talking to her calmly, offering treats and getting her used to our presence by just sitting close by her. We also used wand 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 allowed her to come out of her kennel to play and engage with the other kitties in the program. We noticed she became more confident and comfortable with her surroundings any chance she had being around other cats. She then moved into our Sunroom, which is a communal room, where she could live with other cats 24/7. While in this room, we watched and observed as she climbed the cat towers to look out the windows, snuggled with the other kitties and pounced on toys with enthusiasm. The team also sat in this room with her, offering wand toys and tasty treats which she readily accepted from us. While Honeydew is comfortable being close by people, she is still very hesitant about being pet. She will come up to sniff our fingers, take treats from our hands, but any attempt at petting her results in her moving away. We can see that she wants to be pet as she maneuvers her body near us in a flirty fashion but she's still just not sure about it. On a few occasions she has allowed a small handful of people to pet her, but it usually lasts for only a few seconds.

Honeydew will need a family that is committed to helping her progress even more. She still has a long way to go at accepting pets and her new family should expect to work with her on this. Honeydew may never be the snuggly, cuddly kitty that we all want her to be, but she does enjoy being around people. She's an active, playful girl who needs time to build confidence and trust with people. Her favorite activities are playing with toys, eating treats, and relaxing in the best sunspots. Other cats have been crucial in helping her build confidence. Honeydew will need to find a home where there is another cat for her to have as a friend.

**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. Honeydew typically runs, hides, and hisses when overwhelmed or scared. 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 Honeydew 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 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 Honeydew while in her hidey spot. Over time, by continuing to do this, Honeydew will become more comfortable and recognize that yummy food/playtime = people, therefore creating a positive association between the two.

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

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

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

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