



Jason 301719: What to Expect

Jason is a graduate of the Behavior Modification Program and needs a special home. Jason is a sensitive, playful boy who is ready to find his forever home. Jason 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. Jason 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.

Jason was transferred to the OHS Salem campus 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. After a month at the Salem campus with no change in his behavior, he 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 him and help him overcome his fears.

When he first arrived in the Behavior Modification program, Jason hid for several days and would hiss when we approached him. We worked on building trust and confidence by talking to him calmly, offering treats and getting him used to our presence by just sitting close by him. We also used wand toys to build a positive association with people. As we soared the wand toy through the air he would watch, chase and pounce on it with great delight. We also allowed him to come out of his kennel to play and engage with the other kitties in the program. We noticed he became more confident and comfortable in his environment any chance he had to be around other cats. He then moved into our Sunroom, which is a communal room, where he could live with other cats 24/7. While in this room, we watched and observed as he 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 him, offering wand toys and tasty treats which he readily accepted from us. While Jason is comfortable being close by people, he is still very hesitant about being pet. He will come up to sniff our fingers, take treats from our hands, but any attempt at petting him results in him moving away. We can see that he wants to be pet as he maneuvers his body near us in a flirty fashion but he's still just not sure about it. On a few occasions he has allowed a small handful of people to pet him, but it usually lasts for only a few seconds.

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

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. Jason typically runs, hides, and hisses 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. **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 Jason 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 Jason while in his hidey spot. Over time, by

continuing to do this, Jason will become more comfortable and recognize that yummy food/playtime = people, therefore creating a positive association between the two.

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

This step is crucial in helping Jason acclimate to his new home. Confine Jason to one cat-proof room in your house.

Provide Jason 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 Jason 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 Jason is worried about, allow him to hang back or hide if he chooses to do so.

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