



Iceberg 332634: What to Expect

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

Iceberg came to OHS from the home of an overwhelmed cat caregiver and we do not have much history on him. When Iceberg arrived at OHS he displayed fearful, shy behavior and was avoidant of being pet. Iceberg is very good at communicating when he is scared by hissing and swatting to let us know if we are too close. Soon after arriving, he bit a staff member's finger when he managed to wedge himself behind a fridge and the staff were trying to remove him. The bite was a quick bite and release and did not require medical attention. Due to his fearful behavior, the decision was made to place him in our Behavior Modification program. The environment in the BMOD program is better suited at helping cats feel comfortable in a shelter environment. With the larger kennel space, access to windows, increased enrichment, and one on one time with the team we set out to learn more about him.

Over the last few months, we have worked with Iceberg to build a relationship and trust with him. He is nervous with fast or loud movements but responds well to verbal encouragement. He loves Churus and we used these treats to build a positive association with people. He is quiet and reserved in his kennel, hanging out on his cat tower or looking out the window. He is not overly active and prefers to find the softest blanket to nap on. He struggled with hands approaching to pet him and would hiss at first so we made the decision to introduce a Touch tool. A Touch tool is anything that can be considered an extension of your hand. In his case, we used a back scratcher. As we brought the scratcher close, he would lean forward to sniff it and he allowed us to gently touch his chin and cheek area. Iceberg enjoyed being touched with the Touch tool, leaning in and softly closing his eyes, but he continued to be hesitant with hands approaching. Every time we presented the Touch tool to him we would also give him treats to build a positive association between the two. Overtime, Iceberg started accepting touch with hands but is still nervous at times and is very good at communicating when he is unsure.

Iceberg has been in our care for several months now, and while he has made progress, he will need ongoing support in his new home. We have tried our best to make his current situation less scary and at this point we feel a home environment rather than a shelter environment will only help him thrive more. He will need an experienced owner, someone that is familiar working with shy/fearful cats and that has the time and patience to help him acclimate. Iceberg has a positive history living with other cats in his previous home and may benefit from having a kitty companion.

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. Iceberg typically flees, hisses and swats 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 Iceberg 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 wet food or a treat on a spoon and offer it to Iceberg while in his hidey spot. Over time, by continuing to do this, Iceberg will become more comfortable and recognize that yummy food = people, therefore creating a positive association between the two.

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

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

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

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