



Lilibet 335663: What to Expect

Lilibet is a graduate of the Behavior Modification Program and needs a special home. Lilibet is a shy but sweet girl who needs a family that has the time and desire to allow her to acclimate in her own time. Lilibet is a sensitive girl who needs time to build a relationship with people. She may never be a social butterfly with everyone she meets, but she will bond with her new family when given time to acclimate.

Lilibet was transferred to OHS from another shelter and the only information we were provided was that she was found living outside. When she arrived, she displayed fearful behavior, crouching low in her kennel, cowering and running away any time the staff attempted to handle her. It was clear she was very scared and overwhelmed with her current situation so the decision was made to place her 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, quieter environment and increased one on one time with the team, we set out to learn more about her and help her overcome her fears.

Lilibet was nervous for the first several weeks in BMOD and spent most of her time hiding in her bed and watching us with wide eyes. In the beginning, she would hiss if we got too close but we understood this was her way of communicating she was scared. We would talk softly to her every day and leave treats in her kennel to build a positive association with people. We found out pretty quickly that she loves Churus and soon she was eating them from our hands. She also showed an interest in playing with toys. As we would soar the wand toy through the air, she would stalk and pounce on it with great delight. Though she began to trust our presence and took treats and toys when offered she continued to be hesitant with hands approaching and would back away. We worked on building trust by introducing a Touch tool. A Touch tool is anything that can be considered an extension of your hand. In her case, we used a back scratcher. As we brought the scratcher close, she would lean forward to sniff it. We then gently rubbed her cheeks for a second then reward with a treat. She is now accepting pets from staff that have befriended her but occasionally startles and may hiss or back away. Lilibet has shown tremendous progress here and we know that in the right home she will thrive even more.

Lilibet's favorite activities are taking naps, watching wildlife out the window, snacking on Churus and playing with feather wand toys. She has met several other kitties here and doesn't care to interact with them. She's a reserved and quiet kitty who would do fine as the only kitty in her new home. While we don't know much about Lilibet's life before she came here, she has shown us what a brave and beautiful girl she is. Her new family should be patient with Lilibet and understand that it will take time for her to acclimate to a new home. If you have a soft spot for sweet, playful, sensitive yet brave kitties, then Lilibet is the one you've been looking for.

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. Lilibet typically runs and hides when overwhelmed or scared, so it's important to not overwhelm her as she adjusts to her new home. 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 Lilibet 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 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 Lilibet while in her hidey spot. Or toss her a few crunchy treats. Bring the laser pointer or wand toy out and allow her to observe and engage with it. Over time, by continuing to do this, Lilibet will become more comfortable and recognize that yummy food/playtime = people, therefore creating a positive association between the two.

Here's how to help Lilibet during your first month together:

This step is crucial in helping Lilibet acclimate to her new home. Confine Lilibet to one cat-proof room in your house. Provide Lilibet 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. Once she is using the litter box, eating regularly, and coming out of hiding to play with toys, you can start introducing her to the rest of your home.

Spend time with Lilibet 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 Touch Tool, treats or toys. 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 Lilibet is worried about, allow her to hang back or hide if she chooses to do so.

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

Lilibet 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 with everyone she meets but she will bond with her new family. 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 Lilibet 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 to connect with the Feline Behavior Modification Manager.

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

Oregon Humane Society | 1067 NE Columbia Blvd. | Portland, OR 97211
Pet Behavior Help Line: (503)416-2983 | oregonhumane.org/training