



Mr. Laurel 330996: What to Expect

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

Mr. Laurel came to OHS through the Friends Forever program after his previous owner passed away. The Friends Forever program at OHS helps clients make provisions for care and adoption of their surviving pets. His previous owner loved Mr. Laurel deeply and surviving relatives of his owner provided us with the following information about Mr. Laurel and the relationship he had with his previous owner

“Mr. Laurel loves who he knows. He is shy to strangers and takes time to warm up to new people. Once adjusted, he is affectionate, playful, and well mannered. He will want to do things in his own time. A new owner will need to be patient. His owner, recently deceased, gave much love and time to his kitties. Laurel would often sleep with his owner at night, keeping both cozy. He is a 100% indoor kitty and hasn't been introduced to dogs or children. He has enjoyed cat trees and toys such as catnip and balls.”

When Mr. Laurel arrived at OHS he displayed fearful, shy behavior and was avoidant of being pet. Mr. Laurel 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 sink 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 history of fearful behavior as well as the behavior he displayed in the shelter environment, 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.

Mr. Laurel struggled being in a shelter environment. With all the new people, smells and changes he was experiencing it's no wonder he was nervous. While in BMOD, we spent time building a relationship with him by sitting calmly in his kennel and talking to him. He continued to hiss/swat if we got too close but started to understand that having people visit meant he would be given treats. At first, he would only eat the treats after we left his kennel, but eventually he started eating the treats in our presence. Churu treats are his favorite. Because Mr. Laurel did not like our hands approaching to attempt to pet him, we instead used 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 then quickly swat at it. Every time we presented the Touch tool to him we would also give him treats to build a positive association between the two. Overtime, Mr. Laurel would occasionally accept touch with the Touch tool but he was also good at letting us know when he didn't want to be touched.

Mr. Laurel 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. Mr. Laurel 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. Mr. Laurel 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 Mr. Laurel 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 Mr. Laurel while in his hidey spot. Over time, by continuing to do this, Mr. Laurel will become more comfortable and recognize that yummy food = people, therefore creating a positive association between the two.

Here's how to help Mr. Laurel during your first months together:

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

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