



Banana 341223: What to Expect

Banana is a graduate of the Behavior Modification Program and needs a special home. Banana is a sweet and sensitive boy who is ready to find his forever home. He may be timid at first, but once he feels safe he enjoys cheek and chin scratches and enjoys being close by people. Banana 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.

Banana came to OHS from the home of an overwhelmed cat caregiver and we do not have much history on him. When Banana arrived at OHS he displayed fearful, shy behavior that would present itself as hissing, swatting and attempting to bite if we got too close to him. After 2 weeks with no change in his 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.

Banana was nervous for the first few weeks in BMOD and spent most of his time hiding in his bed and watching us with wide eyes. In the beginning, he would cower and hide if we got too close but we understood this was his way of communicating he was scared. We would talk softly to him every day and leave treats in his kennel to build a positive association with people. As he started to understand we were not a threat his body language relaxed and he began to eat the treats that we offered in our presence. He also showed an interest in toys, and as we soared the wand toy though the air, he chased and pounced on it with great delight. By using toys and treats (two things Banana loves) it helped him to understand that only good things happen when people are around. His trust with us grew even more and soon he was accepting pets with our hands. As we gently rubbed his cheek and chin he started leaning into the touch and soon would roll around and purr with happiness. Banana enjoys being pet once he feels safe with someone but it will take some time for him to get to know his new family. Banana still has moments when he startles easily and may run and hide but recovers quickly with verbal encouragement. He has shown tremendous progress here and we know that in the right home he will thrive even more.

Banana loves being around other cats. Having a cat friend helps him feel safe and secure. He is often seen playing and snuggling with the other kitties in the program. Banana will do best in a calm home, with a family that is patient with him as he acclimates. He will also need a kitty friend to snuggle and play with.

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

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

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

Continue to provide a safe space. Even when Banana 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 Banana time to adjust to your house, routine, and lifestyle before introducing him to new people. When you have visitors over, give Banana the freedom to make the decision to interact (or not!). Ask new people to ignore him – or if Banana seems curious or interested, have the new person toss his 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 his to run into the carrier on cue. Helping Banana 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 Banana 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. Banana 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 Banana 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 Banana 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!