



Orbita 343366: What to Expect

Orbita is a graduate of the Behavior Modification Program and needs a special home. Orbita is a sweet and sensitive girl who is ready to find her forever home. She may be timid at first, but once she feels safe, she enjoys being close by people and playing with toys. Orbita may never be a social butterfly with everyone she meets, but she will bond with someone when given the time she needs to get to know you.

Orbita came to OHS from the home of an overwhelmed cat caregiver, and we do not have much history on her. When Orbita arrived at OHS, she displayed fearful, shy behavior that would present itself as hiding, cowering, and avoidance of touch when the staff attempted to engage with her. After 2 weeks with no change in her behavior, we made the decision to place her in a foster home to help her decompress and acclimate to all the changes she was experiencing. While in the foster home, she continued to struggle with fearful behavior, spending most of her time hiding under the bed when the foster parent was in the room with her, only coming out to explore when left alone. Due to the minimal progress she was making in the foster home, we made the decision to bring her back to the shelter and place her in the 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 her.

While the foster parent was attempting to place her into a carrier for transport back to the shelter, they scooped her up from under the bed where she had been hiding. As they were holding her and began to move closer to the carrier, Orbita flailed and gave a quick bite-and-release on the tip of their finger. The injury was very minor, and no medical intervention was needed.

For the first few weeks in BMOD, Orbita would stare at us with wide eyes as she crouched and hid in her kennel. Any movement towards her caused her to run away, but we knew that this was her way of communicating she was scared. Every day we would sit calmly in her kennel and talk softly to her. Each interaction with people was paired with treats to build a positive association with the staff. As she started to understand we were not a threat her body language relaxed and she began to eat the treats that we offered in our presence. She also showed an interest in toys, and as we soared the wand toy through the air, she chased and pounced on it with great delight. By using toys and treats (two things Orbita loves) it helped her to understand that only good things happen when people are around. Her trust with us grew even more and soon she accepted pets with our hands when we went slow with her. Once she feels safe with somebody, she leans into cheek and chin scratches. Orbita still has moments when she startles easily and may run and hide but recovers quickly with verbal encouragement. She has shown tremendous progress here and we know that in the right home she will thrive even more.

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

Orbita has a cloudy appearance on the cornea of her right eye. Our medical team has examined her and determined that this is a lesion caused by a previous trauma. At this time she is comfortable and not in need of any medical care, but we do recommend that her adopter follow up with their veterinarian as she may warrant future treatment if the condition changes.

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

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

This step is crucial in helping Orbita acclimate to her new home. Confine Orbita to one cat-proof room in your house. Provide Orbita 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.

Spend time with Orbita 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 Orbita is worried about, allow her to hang back or hide if she chooses to do so.

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