



## Fancy 345003: What to Expect

**Fancy is a graduate of the Behavior Modification Program and needs a special home.** Fancy 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. Once she knows you are her friend, she loves being pet and will occasionally play with toys. She may never be a social butterfly with everyone she meets, but she will bond with her new family when given time to acclimate.

Fancy came to OHS as a transfer from another shelter and we don't have much history on her. When she arrived, she displayed fearful behavior, crouching low, cowering and burrowing her head into her bedding whenever 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, calmer environment and increased one-on-one time with the team, we set out to learn more about her and help her overcome her fears.

Fancy was very nervous for the first week in BMOD and spent most of her time hiding in her bed and ignoring us. In the beginning, she would turn away from us in her bed and avoid interaction. At this time she was awaiting a dental and was experiencing some pain along with the stress of being in a new environment. Fancy was already missing quite a few teeth from her severe gingivitis and gingival recession, and because her remaining teeth were in poor health and causing her pain, our medical team made the decision to remove the rest of her remaining teeth. As she recovered from surgery, she continued to lay in her bed most hours of the day. At first when we approached her, she would turn away from us. We would sit with her and talk softly to her every day and leave treats in her kennel to build a positive association with people. She started to become more receptive to our visits with her, and 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 rewarded her bravery with a treat. It didn't take long for Fancy to understand that touch was something she liked and she now accepts and loves being pet by the staff that have befriended her and will lean into pets and purr. Fancy is relaxed in our presence and no longer turns away from us. She will eat treats in our presence and bat at the occasional feather wand toy. She is happy to have us come and sit with her and give her pets and talk to her, and she has shown us that she is just a sweet little lady that loves a warm cozy place to nap- sometimes we even hear her cute little snore! During her stay with us, we have introduced her to other kitties in the BMOD program and she has shown us that she is indifferent to them.

Now that Fancy is fully healed from her dental extraction surgery, we found that even though she is our little gummy girl, she still loves her crunchy treats best! She was very brave for her advanced dental procedure that was performed, and there are no ongoing medical needs. Fancy may no longer have any teeth, but she's still a happy girl! She will do best in a calm, quiet home where there are many cozy places to nap and relax. If you're looking for a couch companion, then she's the girl for you!

**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. Fancy 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 Fancy 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 Fancy 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, Fancy will become more comfortable and recognize that yummy food/playtime = people, therefore creating a positive association between the two.

### **Here's how to help Fancy during your first month together:**

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

Provide Fancy 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 Fancy 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 Fancy is worried about, allow her to hang back or hide if she chooses to do so.

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

Fancy 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 Fancy 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](mailto:erikas@oregonhumane.org) to connect with the Feline Behavior Modification Manager.

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