



Lark 308885: What to Expect

Lark is a graduate of the Behavior Modification Program and needs a special home. Lark is a sweet and sensitive lady who is ready to find her forever home. She may be timid at first, but once she feels safe, she enjoys staying close to her people, leaning into gentle pets, and playing with her toys. Lark may never be a social butterfly, especially around new people, but with patience and time, she will build a deep and loving bond with someone she learns to trust.

Lark was adopted from OHS in 2024 and was recently returned due to her owner no longer being able to care for her. Her previous family described Lark as a loving, gentle, and cautious kitty who formed a strong bond with the other cat in the home. They believe she would thrive in a calm, quiet environment, and once she's had time to settle in and feel safe, she enjoys being petted, watching birds through the window, and playing with her toys. When she arrived at OHS she displayed fearful behavior and would cower and hide in her kennel with tense body language. Any attempt by the staff to engage with her caused her to hiss and swat. Due to her fearful behavior, the decision was made to bring her into our Behavior Modification Program. This program offers an environment better suited to helping cats feel at ease in a shelter setting. With a larger kennel space, access to windows, a quieter atmosphere, and more one-on-one time with staff, we were able to begin to get a better understanding of her needs and personality.

When Lark first entered the Behavior Modification program, she spent several days hiding on her cat tower and would hiss, lunge, and swat when approached. To help her build confidence and trust, the team focused on a calm, consistent presence—speaking softly to her and simply sitting nearby so she could become comfortable with us at her own pace and pairing these interactions with tasty treats. It didn't take long to discover that Churus are her absolute favorite! Wand toys were introduced to help further strengthen positive associations with people, and she quickly revealed her playful side, watching intently as the feather wand moved through the air, then chasing and pouncing on it with great enthusiasm!

As Lark began to realize we weren't a threat, her body language slowly softened. She started eating treats comfortably in our presence and even began to softly meow to us. She was still unsure about hands reaching towards her and would back away when we tried to pet her. To help her feel more comfortable, we introduced 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. When we gently offered it, she leaned forward to sniff it and allowed us to softly scratch her chin and cheeks for a few seconds. Once she realized how much she enjoyed it, she leaned in for more.

As she gained confidence, she showed interest in leaving her kennel to interact and play with other kitties in the program. She has gotten along well with the cats she has met, as long as they respect her space. Over time, Lark has continued to build trust with the team and is now more comfortable with handling—she enjoys gentle pets and is always ready for playtime or a tasty treat. Lark can still be sensitive to loud noises or sudden movements and may run to hide when startled. However, she recovers quickly with calm, gentle reassurance. Once she has built trust with her people, she has the cutest little meow, and she happily saunters up to us, leaning in for cheek and chin scratches and full body pets. Her favorite activities are leaping after wand toys and lasers, attentively watching bird videos, enthusiastically using her scratching post, and rolling around in catnip.

Lark needs plenty of reassurance to feel safe and secure in her surroundings. Once she feels comfortable, her loving and affectionate personality truly shines. She is sensitive to loud noises and busy environments, so she will need a patient family who can give her the time and support she needs to settle into her new home. Lark is cautious, sweet, and may always be a bit on the timid side, but she forms strong bonds with the people she trusts. She has a positive history living with other cats and would likely enjoy a calm feline companion who prefers relaxing and cuddling over rough-and-tumble play. Lark would do best in a quiet home where she can feel safe, build confidence, and truly thrive.

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

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

This step is crucial in helping Lark acclimate to her new home. Confine Lark to one cat-proof room in your house. Provide Lark 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.). Instead, provide her with a safe, comfortable hiding place like her cat carrier, a hidey-bed, or a large dog crate covered with a blanket.

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

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