



## Lucius 346444: What to Expect

**Lucius is a graduate of the Behavior Modification Program and needs a special home.** Lucius is a playful yet sensitive boy who is ready to find his forever home. Lucius would thrive with a patient, experienced owner who understands feline body language and is willing to give him the time and space he needs to adjust at his own pace. Lucius 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.

Lucius came to OHS from another shelter and we don't have much history on him. When Lucius arrived at OHS he displayed fearful, shy behavior that would present itself as cowering, darting and attempting to bite if we got too close to him. Due to his fearful 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.

Over the last few months, we have worked closely with Lucius to build trust and strengthen our relationship with him. He is sensitive to fast or loud movements but responds positively to calm voices, gentle encouragement, and slow movements. In the beginning, Lucius was very fearful of human interaction. He would hiss, swat, and run away whenever anyone came too close. To help him feel safe, we spent time sitting nearby, speaking softly to him, and offering treats to show that we were not a threat.

We quickly discovered that Lucius loves treats—especially Churus! As we continued offering treats, his body language gradually became more relaxed in our presence. We focused on creating a consistent routine that included soft, reassuring interaction and positive reinforcement. After several weeks, Lucius showed significant progress. He no longer hissed or swatted at us, and while he still preferred to keep some distance, he became noticeably more comfortable and trusting around people.

Lucius also developed a strong interest in wand toys. As we moved the toy through the air, he would stalk, chase, and pounce on it with obvious delight. By engaging in these enjoyable activities with Lucius, we were able to build a strong foundation of positive associations with people.

Although Lucius became more comfortable in our presence and would eagerly come out of his kennel anytime we offered a wand toy, he continued to struggle with hands approaching to pet him and would hiss or swat in response. Because of this, we decided to introduce a touch tool. A touch tool is any object that can serve as an extension of the hand; in Lucius's case, we used a back scratcher. When the scratcher was brought near him, he would often shrink back or cower. If it continued to move closer, he would hiss, swat, or run away. Lucius is still not fully comfortable with being pet, and his future family should be prepared to continue helping him build positive associations with touch through the use of toys, treats, and patience.

Lucius has also had opportunities to interact with other cats in the BMOD program after showing curiosity and interest in them while watching through the windows of his kennel. During face-to-face introductions, his body language varied depending on the individual cat. When he felt unsure, he would puff up his fur and yowl to communicate his discomfort. With cats he appeared to like, he displayed relaxed body language and would rub against them in a friendly manner. If there are resident cats in his new home, his new family should plan to provide slow, gradual introductions to help him feel comfortable and set him up for success.

Lucius has grown to enjoy visits from staff and is often the first to greet us in the morning with an enthusiastic meow to let us know he is ready to play with his wand toy. Although he has made meaningful progress during his time here, he will continue to need support in his new home. He still struggles with being touched and will need a patient, dedicated family who is willing to continue helping him build confidence and positive associations with people.

We have worked hard to make his current environment feel safe and less intimidating, and at this stage we believe a stable home environment, rather than a shelter setting, will give him the best opportunity to continue thriving. 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. If you are looking for a cuddly kitty that loves being pet, then Lucius is not the one for you.

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. Lucius 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 Lucius 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 or toys to show you are not a threat. Place a small amount of wet food or a treat on a spoon and offer it to Lucius while in his hidey spot. Over time, by continuing to do this, Lucius will become more comfortable and recognize that yummy food/toys = people, therefore creating a positive association between the two.

#### **Here's how to help Lucius during your first months together:**

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

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

to ignore him – or if Lucius 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 Lucius 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 Lucius 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. Lucius 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 Lucius 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 the BMOD cat trainers at [bmodcat@oregonhumane.org](mailto:bmodcat@oregonhumane.org) to connect with the Feline Behavior Modification department.

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