



## Cattarina 350528: What to Expect

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

Cattarina came to OHS from another shelter, so we have limited information about her background. Shortly after arriving, she was adopted but returned about a week later because the home was not the right fit. In her adopter's home, Cattarina was very shy and fearful, often running away whenever her adopter tried to handle her. Despite her timid nature, she also showed a playful side, especially at night, when she enjoyed playing with toys and getting the zoomies. Her nighttime activity disrupted her adopter's sleep, and combined with her nervous behavior towards people, the adopter ultimately decided that they were not the best match for Cattarina and returned her to the shelter.

When she came back to the shelter, she spent her time hiding in her kennel with wide eyes and tense body language. Due to the behavior she displayed in the shelter and the information provided by the adopter, we made the decision to move her to 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.

Cattarina acclimated to the BMOD program remarkably quickly. She could often be found lounging on her perch, watching staff with soft, relaxed eyes, and would eagerly ask to come out of her kennel to play with the wand toys we offered. Play is one of Cattarina's favorite activities—she loves stalking, chasing, and pouncing on wand toys with enthusiasm. Cattarina also showed a strong interest in interacting with the other cats in the BMOD program. Because of her social nature, she was moved into the Sunroom, a communal cat room where she could live alongside other cats full-time. She has done very well in this environment and is often seen snuggling with and playing alongside her feline companions.

As Cattarina became more comfortable with staff, she showed that while she enjoys being around people, she remains cautious about being touched. If someone tries to pet her before she's ready, she will typically move away. Even so, Cattarina often chooses to stay close, rolling around, showing off her playful personality, and engaging with people in ways that indicate she feels safe and enjoys their company. Several staff members have been able to pet her successfully when she is relaxed or sleepy, and during those moments she appears to enjoy the affection. Her new family should be prepared to continue building her trust and confidence by allowing her to set the pace for physical interaction and respecting her boundaries.

While she has grown confident in this environment, she still has moments when she startles easily and may run and hide, but with gentle verbal reassurance she recovers quickly. Cattarina will do best in a calm, quiet home with someone who understands that trust takes time and is willing to provide the patience and support she needs to settle in and feel secure. She will also need a kitty friend in her new home; one she can snuggle and play with. She has shown tremendous progress here and we know that in the right home she will flourish even more.

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

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

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

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

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

