



Luke 353046: What to Expect

Luke is a graduate of the Behavior Modification Program and needs a special home. Luke is a sweet and handsome boy who is ready to find his forever home. He may be a little timid at first, but once he feels safe, his sweet personality truly shines. He loves being pet, enjoying yummy treat and birdwatching from his window-side cat tower. Luke may never be a social butterfly with everyone he meets, but with patience, understanding, and time to build trust, he will form an incredibly strong and loving bond with his person.

Luke was brought into another shelter due to his caretaker no longer being able to care for him, and we do not have much history on him. When Luke first arrived at his previous shelter, he displayed shy and fearful behavior. He would cower and hide when staff approached. Because he was experiencing a high level of stress in that environment, the decision was made to transfer him to OHS, where he could receive additional support through 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 dedicated one-on-one time with our team, we were able to help him decompress and learn more about his personality.

Luke was nervous during his first week in BMOD, spending much of his time tucked away on a high perch, watching us with wide, cautious eyes. We respected his boundaries, spoke to him gently, and offered treats to help him build positive associations with people. Slowly but surely, Luke began to realize that we were not a threat, and his body language became noticeably softer and more relaxed. When we first offered our hands for him to investigate, Luke would cower and back away. It became clear that, while he was ok with us being close to him, he wasn't quite ready for hands-on interaction. So, we introduced a touch tool—an object that acts as an extension of your hand. For Luke, we used a back scratcher. As we gently touched his cheeks with the back scratcher, Luke surprised us by leaning into it, closing his eyes, and purring happily. It quickly became clear that Luke loved being touched; he was simply unsure about the people behind the hands. We continued using the back scratcher to help him build confidence and trust. Before long, Luke was accepting gentle touches from our hands, leaning into affection, flirtatiously rolling around, and purring contentedly.

Now that Luke knows we are his friends, he looks forward to his time with us and happily soaks up every pet he can get. While he can still be easily startled at times and may run and hide, he recovers quickly with gentle verbal encouragement and reassurance. Beyond his affectionate personality, Luke is also an avid bird-watcher. He loves spending time perched by his favorite windows, taking in all the sights and sounds of the world outside. He has met several of the other cats here and has done very well with them. Luke may enjoy having a calm, easygoing kitty companion in his new home, but he would be equally happy as the only cat. Luke is not a fan of rough-and-tumble play, so a home with a high-energy or overly rambunctious cat would not be the best match for him. He much prefers gentle, calm companions who will respect his space and let him enjoy life at his own pace.

Luke has made tremendous progress during his time with us, and we know that with the patience, love, and security of the right home, he will continue to blossom. He will do best in a calm environment with a family who understands that he may need a little time to fully settle in and feel comfortable.

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

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

This step is crucial in helping Luke acclimate to his new home. Confine Luke to one cat-proof room in your house.

Provide Luke 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 Luke 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 Luke is worried about, allow him to hang back or hide if he chooses to do so.

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

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