



Thumbelina 353306: What to Expect

Thumbelina is a graduate of the Behavior Modification Program and needs a special home. Thumbelina is a sweet, sensitive, and adorable little girl who is ready to find her forever home. Thumbelina may be a little timid at first, but once she feels safe and secure, her charming, playful personality shines through. She loves snuggling with her feline friends, enjoying tasty treats, zooming around the room, curling up in her cozy bed on her cat tower, and playing with her favorite toys. While Thumbelina may never be a social butterfly with everyone she meets, with patience and time to build trust, she'll form a deep bond with her special person and become a fun-loving, energetic companion.

Thumbelina came to OHS from another shelter, and we do not have much history on her. When Thumbelina arrived at OHS she displayed fearful, shy behaviors that presented as hiding, darting, and hissing when the staff attempted to engage with her. Due to the level of stress she was displaying and the impact it had on her ability to comfortably interact with staff, she was enrolled 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 dedicated one-on-one time with our team, we were able to help her decompress and learn more about her personality.

Thumbelina was worried and overwhelmed during her first few days in BMOD. She spent most of her time perched on her cat tower, quietly observing us with wide, cautious eyes, and vocalizing. If anyone approached too closely, she would hiss and dart away, telling us that she was frightened and needed space. We respected her boundaries, spoke to her softly, and offered treats to help her build positive associations with people.

It didn't take long for us to discover one of Thumbelina's favorite things—toys! The moment we brought out a wand toy, she transformed into an agile hunter, expertly stalking her target and pouncing with great enthusiasm. She also loves racing through crinkly tunnels and showing off her climbing skills on tall scratching posts. By pairing our presence with two of Thumbelina's favorite things—playtime and treats— she gradually learned that people bring good things, helping her build confidence and trust. Today, she eagerly sits at the front of her kennel, meowing to let us know she's ready for her next play session.

As Thumbelina's confidence grew, so did her trust in people. She gradually became more comfortable with gentle touch and now accepts soft scratches along her cheeks, neck, and back once she feels safe. Her future family should be prepared to give her the time and patience she needs to continue building trust. They should also be willing to continue working with her on becoming more comfortable with touch, using gentle, positive interactions and respecting her boundaries as her confidence grows.

Another important milestone came when Thumbelina began showing interest in the other cats in the BMOD program. Watching their interactions helped build her confidence, and before long she was happily playing alongside them,

following them around, and rubbing against them affectionately. Their presence gave her an extra sense of security and encouraged her to become more outgoing.

Thumbelina has blossomed into the playful, sweet, and happy little girl we always knew she could be. While she can still be startled by sudden movements or unfamiliar situations and may briefly run to hide, she recovers quickly with gentle reassurance and kind words. She has made tremendous progress during her time in the BMOD program, and we're confident she will continue to flourish in the right home.

Thumbelina truly thrives in the company of other cats. Having a feline friend helps her feel safe, secure, and confident. She can often be found playing, cuddling, or simply relaxing alongside her kitty companions. Because of this, Thumbelina will do best in a calm, patient home where her family will give her the time she needs to settle in at her own pace and with a friendly resident cat to be her friend.

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

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

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

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

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