



Molalla 351018: What to Expect

Molalla is a graduate of the Behavior Modification Program and needs a special home. Molalla is a sweet and playful girl who is ready to find her forever home. Molalla may be a little timid at first, but once she feels safe and secure, her charming, playful personality shines through. She loves enjoying tasty treats, curling up in the sunshine on her window-side cat tower, and playing with her favorite toys. While Molalla 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 companion.

Molalla came to OHS from the home of an overwhelmed cat caregiver that was unable to provide proper care for her. When Molalla arrived at OHS, she displayed fearful, shy behaviors that presented as hiding, cowering, 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.

Molalla was understandably worried and overwhelmed during her first few days in BMOD. She spent much of her time on her cat tower watching us with wide eyes. Whenever staff tried to engage with her, she would cower or quickly retreat to find a safe place. We respected her boundaries, spoke to her softly, and offered treats to help her begin forming positive associations with people. We soon discovered that Molalla loved Churu treats. As we offered the treats, she gradually became comfortable enough to eat them in our presence. Although she was willing to take treats from us, she remained wary of hands and would back away whenever we attempted to pet her. Rather than pushing her beyond her comfort level, we allowed Molalla to set the pace and gave her the time she needed to build trust. By using something she loved to create positive experiences with people, we slowly began helping Molalla feel safer and more comfortable in her new environment.

One thing we quickly learned about Molalla was just how much she loves other cats. From her kennel, she would watch the other kitties with curiosity and interest, clearly eager to meet them. We began introducing her to other cats through supervised playdates, and this is where we saw her confidence blossom even more. At first, Molalla was cautious when meeting a new cat face-to-face, but once she realized they were friends, her playful and affectionate personality began to shine. She would eagerly follow the other cats around like a little puppy, always wanting to be near them and make new friends. It was clear that feline companionship brought Molalla a great deal of comfort and joy. Because she enjoyed the company of other cats so much, Molalla was eventually moved into the Sunroom, our communal cat room where she can live alongside other cats 24/7.

Molalla's confidence around people began to grow even more. Watching the other cats interact comfortably with us helped her realize that perhaps we weren't so scary after all. If her feline friends trusted us, she began to understand that she could trust us, too. Before long, Molalla was accepting gentle pets from our hands. She would lean into our

touch, enjoying the affection, and reward us with the sweetest, happiest purrs. It was a wonderful milestone for a once-timid cat who had worked so hard to learn that people could be safe and kind.

Molalla also has a playful side and will eagerly chase, stalk and pounce on wand toys when we offer them to her. Molalla has blossomed into the playful, sweet, and happy little girl we always knew she could be. She has learned that when people are nearby, it means treats, toys, and plenty of fun. 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. She will do best in a calm, quiet home with a family that can be patient with her as she acclimates to her new home. She will also need to have a cat friend in her new home, one that can help show her that people are not something to be scared of.

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. Molalla 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 Molalla 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 Molalla while in her hidey spot. Or bring a toy out and engage in play with her. Over time, by continuing to do this, Molalla will become more comfortable and recognize that yummy food/toys = people, therefore creating a positive association between the two.

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

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

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