Forest Grove 351037*:* What to Expect

Forest Grove is a graduate of the Behavior Modification Program and needs a special home. Forest Grove is a playful, yet sensitive and worried girl who is ready to find her forever home. Forest Grove 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. Forest Grove 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.

Forest Grove came to OH from the home of an overwhelmed cat caregiver that was unable to provide proper care for her. When Forest Grove arrived at OH, 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.

Over the past several months, we have worked diligently with Forest Grove to build trust and develop a positive relationship with her. We learned early on that she is sensitive to sudden movements and loud noises but responds well to calm voices, gentle encouragement, and slow, deliberate movements. Initially, Forest Grove was extremely fearful of human interaction, often hissing, lunging, swatting, and running away whenever someone approached her. To help her feel safe and comfortable, we began by spending time sitting near her, speaking softly, and offering treats to build positive associations with our presence. We quickly discovered that treats, especially Churus, were one of her favorite things. Through consistent treat offerings and gentle interactions, Forest Grove gradually became more relaxed and comfortable around us.

We established a predictable routine centered on patience, reassurance, and positive reinforcement. Although progress was not always linear, and occasional loud noises or unexpected events sometimes caused her to become fearful again, we continued to respect her boundaries and work at her pace. After many weeks of consistent effort, Forest Grove made significant progress. She stopped lunging, swatting, and running away when approached by familiar caregivers. While she would still occasionally hiss if someone got too close and continued to prefer having her personal space, she became noticeably more relaxed and trusting around people.

As Forest Grove became more comfortable in our presence, she began showing a growing curiosity about the world around her. She started exploring her space more frequently, investigating the toys we left in her kennel, watching the wildlife outside her window, and even peeking out at us to see what we were doing whenever we spent time nearby. Noticing her growing interest in her surroundings, we decided to introduce a wand toy by gently waving it outside her kennel to see if we could spark her curiosity. As we moved the feather wand back and forth, Forest Grove watched with interest, following its movements with her eyes. It was clear that the toy had caught her attention, giving us another wonderful opportunity to build her confidence through positive, engaging experiences.

Forest Grove quickly revealed herself to be quite the little hunter! Before long, her curiosity about the wand toy became too irresistible to ignore. She began venturing out of her kennel to play, enthusiastically chasing and pouncing on the feather toy with excitement. As her confidence continued to grow, she started exploring the other enrichment items we provided, including tunnels, stuffies, and ping pong balls. She especially enjoys having the freedom to explore and play with her toys, and every now and then, she even gets the zoomies, racing around the room in enthusiastic pursuit of her favorite playthings.

Although Forest Grove has become more comfortable in our presence, she continues to find direct touch challenging. When hands approach to pet her, she may respond by hissing or running away. To help her become more comfortable with touch, we introduced a touch tool, an object that acts as an extension of the hand. For Forest Grove, we used a back scratcher. Initially, even the sight of the scratcher approaching could cause her to shrink back or cower. If it moved closer, she might hiss, swat, or retreat. Forest Grove is still learning that touch can be a positive experience, and her future family should be prepared to continue building her confidence through the use of toys, treats, and plenty of patience. While she may not be ready for hands-on affection just yet, she does enjoy being near her people and will often settle into a cozy spot close to her favorite humans. She also loves hearing how pretty and brave she is! Offer her a few sweet compliments, and she may reward you with gentle, slow blinks, a lovely little way of showing her appreciation.

Forest Grove has also had the opportunity to socialize with other cats in the BMOD program after showing curiosity and interest in them while watching them through her kennel windows. We arranged face-to-face introductions with several cats, and although she was initially cautious and unsure, she quickly formed friendships with many of them. Forest Grove has shown us that she simply needs a little time to warm up to new feline friends. Her initial introductions typically involved cautiously observing the other cat and occasionally hissing if they got too close. However, with repeated introductions, her body language became more relaxed, and her initial uncertainty transformed into genuine excitement about having a kitty companion. Once she feels comfortable, she truly enjoys having another cat around. While Forest Grove may need a little extra time and patience when meeting new feline friends, she has shown us that she thrives in the company of other cats.

Forest Grove has made tremendous progress over the last several months, and it has been wonderful to watch her confidence blossom. She has grown to genuinely enjoy visits from staff and is often the first to greet us each morning, enthusiastically meowing to let us know she is ready to spend time with us. While she has made meaningful strides during her time with us, Forest Grove will need continued support as she transitions into her new home. She still struggles with being touched and will need a patient, dedicated family willing to help her build confidence and develop positive associations with human interaction. Her ideal adopter will have experience working with shy or fearful cats, along with the time, understanding, and patience to let her adjust at her own pace.

Forest Grove will also need a feline companion in her new home. Having another friendly, compatible cat to learn from and spend time with will be an important part of helping her feel comfortable and thrive. It's important to understand that Forest Grove is not your typical cuddly, lap-loving kitty. She may not be ready for pets or snuggles, but she has so much affection to offer in her own unique way. For the right person, earning her trust and watching her confidence continue to grow will be an incredibly rewarding experience.

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

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

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

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

Thank you for adopting from the Oregon Humane Society. Congratulations on your new cat!