Lime 351069*:* What to Expect

Lime is a graduate of the Behavior Modification Program and needs a special home. Lime is a sweet, sensitive, and silly floofy girl who is ready to find her forever home. Lime may be cautious and wary at first, but once she feels safe and secure, her charming, playful personality shines through. She enjoys being near her people, pouncing on wand toys, sunbathing and birdwatching from her window-side cat tower. Lime can easily become fearful and may overstimulate in unfamiliar situations and will need an experienced owner who can be patient with her as she acclimates to her new home.

Lime came to OH from the home of an overwhelmed cat caregiver who was no longer able to provide her with the care she needed. When Lime first arrived at OH, she was overwhelmed and anxious by the many activities and unfamiliar surroundings. Her responses to staff were often unpredictable, alternating between seeking attention and reacting with hissing or swatting when approached. In addition, Lime had several medical concerns that required attention. Unfortunately, the necessary medical handling and treatments further heightened her stress, making it more challenging for her to feel safe and comfortable in her new environment. Once Lime was medically cleared, she was quickly adopted. However, she was returned to the shelter after just five days due to fearful and defensive behaviors exhibited in the home.

Similar to her behavior at OH, Lime would alternate between seeking attention and reacting with hissing or swatting when approached or handled. During her time in the home, Lime bit the adopter on two separate occasions. The first incident occurred when Lime solicited attention by climbing into the adopter's lap. When the adopter attempted to move her using their hands, Lime bit their hand. The second incident occurred when the adopter opened their bedroom door after waking up and walked into the living room. As the adopter proceeded down the hallway, Lime appeared fearful upon seeing them and bit their ankle. Both bites were minor and did not require medical attention. There were also several instances in which Lime swatted at and scratched the adopter.

Due to these interactions, the adopter felt unequipped to manage Lime's behavioral needs and support her through her adjustment period, ultimately making the decision to return her to the shelter. Given the significant stress Lime exhibited during both her initial stay at the shelter and her time in an adoptive home, the decision was made to enroll her in our Behavior Modification Program (BMOD). 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.

During her first few days in BMOD, Lime remained worried and overwhelmed by her new surroundings. She spent much of her time perched on her cat tower, quietly observing staff with wide, cautious eyes. We allowed her the time and space she needed to take in her environment and gradually learn that she was safe.

After a few days, Lime began to show signs of settling in. She started exploring her kennel, approaching the front to greet staff with soft meows and slow blinks. Her body language became more relaxed, and she could often be found lounging on her cat tower, playing with the toys we offered, or watching the wildlife outside her window.

When staff entered her space, Lime would often approach quickly and rub against our legs. Her tail would remain upright and sometimes vibrate with excitement. Although she initiated these interactions, the vibrating tail suggested she was still experiencing some overstimulation and uncertainty. We recognized that Lime needed the opportunity to interact at her own pace without the added stimulation of physical touch. Rather than attempting to pet her, we allowed her to approach, rub against our legs, and offer headbutts as she gathered information about us. These interactions appeared to be her way of assessing whether we were trustworthy and could be considered a friend. By respecting her boundaries and allowing her to take the lead, we could help build trust while minimizing the risk of escalating her stress or overstimulation.

Over the following days and weeks, as we continued spending time with Lime, she began showing us just how affectionate she could be. She loved jumping into our laps, leaning into us, offering headbutts, and even climbing onto our shoulders. While these behaviors showed her desire for social interaction, we also recognized that they could be signs of overstimulation, particularly given the anxiety she continued to experience at times. With this in mind, we slowly began introducing gentle petting during our interactions. Lime especially enjoyed chin and cheek scratches, often leaning into our hands and purring happily. We kept these sessions brief, however, to ensure she remained comfortable and did not become overstimulated.

As Lime became more familiar with her new friends, we noticed her body language continued to soften and relax. Her tail vibrated less frequently during interactions, giving us encouraging signs that she was becoming more comfortable and beginning to recognize us as safe and trustworthy. As her confidence grew, we gradually increased the length and frequency of our petting sessions, always paying close attention to her body language and making sure to keep her below her threshold for overstimulation. By allowing Lime to set the pace, we were able to build on the trust she was developing while helping her enjoy affection in a way that felt safe and positive for her.

We also incorporated interactive play into our daily interactions with Lime using wand toys. Although she enjoys chasing and pouncing on her toys, we quickly learned that her favorite activities involved spending time with people. Whether curled up in our laps or following us around as we went about our daily tasks, Lime simply enjoyed being near her human friends and included in whatever we were doing. It became clear just how much she valued companionship and social interaction. By taking the time to understand her unique communication style, accurately read her body language, and recognize when she needed a break, we were able to build positive and trusting relationships with her. Throughout her time in the BMOD program, Lime never bit or scratched any staff members.

Lime has made tremendous progress during her time in the BMOD program, and we are confident she will continue to thrive in the right home. She will benefit from an experienced adopter who can recognize and understand her unique communication style while providing the patience, consistency, and time she needs to adjust to a new environment. Based on our observations, Lime's anxious and overstimulated behaviors appear to be most prominent in unfamiliar settings and during periods of transition. We have seen these behaviors gradually decrease as she has become more comfortable and settled into her surroundings at OH. With an adopter who is willing to respect her boundaries, recognize her subtle signals, and allow her to acclimate at her own pace, we believe Lime has the potential to become a wonderful and affectionate companion. Lime has also shown us that she doesn't care for other cats and will need to be the only kitty in her new home.

Lime's new family should be prepared for her to feel nervous and uncertain for the first few weeks in her new home, potentially longer. She will need a slow, gradual introduction to her new surroundings, people, and routines. When

feeling anxious or overstimulated, Lime may swat or bite, so it is important to recognize and respect her communication signals and allow her to set the pace of interactions.

Setting Lime up for success starts with choosing the right room. Before bringing her home, consider which space would be best for her to decompress and acclimate. Ideally, this should be a quiet room with minimal foot traffic, where she can feel safe and have access to comfortable places to rest and observe her surroundings. If you are considering a bedroom, will it be available for Lime to have her own space without frequent interruptions? If you are considering a laundry room or bathroom, consider whether the regular activity, noise, and coming and going of people might be overwhelming for her. Providing a quiet, predictable space will give Lime the opportunity to settle in and allow you to begin building a trusting relationship with her.

During your time together in her room, use calm voices and offer tasty treats to help create positive associations with your presence. Allow Lime to approach you when she feels ready rather than reaching for or pursuing her. If she solicits attention by rubbing against your legs or climbing into your lap, allow her to initiate these interactions, but keep them brief at first. As she becomes more comfortable and you learn to recognize her body language, you can gradually increase the duration of these interactions. Most importantly, let Lime guide the process and be mindful of signs that she may be becoming anxious or overstimulated. Building trust will take time but allowing her to feel safe and in control of her interactions will give her the best chance at a successful transition.

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

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

Enrich her space. Lime loves toys, scratching posts and perches with a window view. Giving her the opportunity to climb, jump, play, scratch and engage in natural cat behavior may help reduce overstimulated behaviors.

Keep a routine. A predictable daily schedule will help Lime settle into your home. Give her time to get to know you before introducing her to new people.

Schedule interactive play sessions with her every day. Lime needs at least 10 minutes of dedicated play in the morning and again in the evening to alleviate stress and built-up frustration. Try to mimic natural hunting behavior. Choose a fishing-pole toy and make the toy soar around the room like a bird, engaging Lime's attention. Or simulate mouse activity by sliding the end of the toy around on the floor in quick, jerky movements. Allow her to pounce and catch the toy and bat it around. Then start again. End your play session by allowing her to capture the toy.

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 Lime get comfortable with her carrier will make it easier when it's time to visit the vet.

We're here to help!

We want Lime 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 Lime 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!