

# KittenTV: When you have an itch that nothing else will scratch

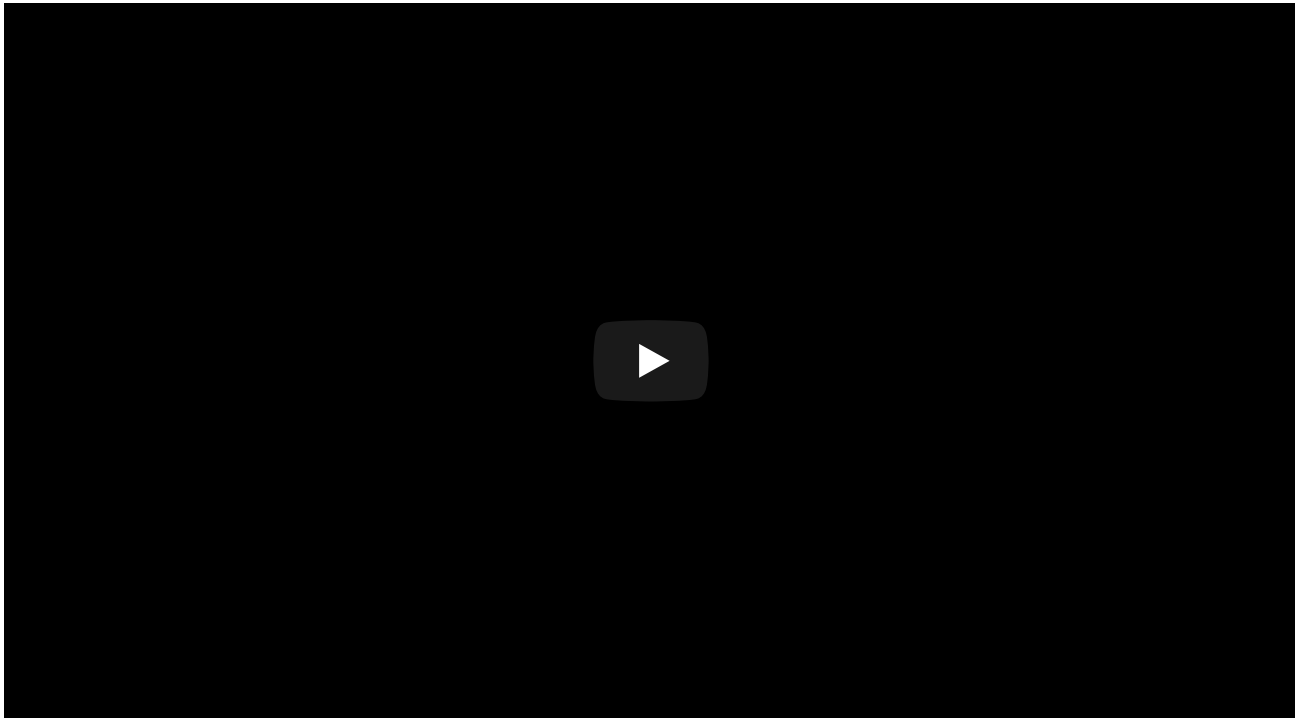
Amid quantified online cuteness, kittens are a top currency. “Kittens are the new Bitcoin,” 39-year-old Kurt Spenrath, a man currently filming frolicking kittens for a living, said jokingly.



FISH GRIWKOWSKY

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Published on: June 4, 2015 | Last Updated: June 4, 2015 10:39 AM MDT



Kittens from Little Cats Lost Society play on the set of KittenTV, made by Edmonton independent film production company Open Sky Pictures, currently filming its second season. Video by Fish Griwkowsky, Edmonton Journal

EDMONTON – Amid quantified online cuteness, kittens are a top currency.

“Kittens are the new Bitcoin,” 39-year-old Kurt Spenrath, a man currently filming frolicking kittens for a living, said jokingly.

Spenrath co-owns Open Sky Pictures with local filmmaker Fred Kroetsch and others, local producers of KittenTV — part of a new wave of something called ambient television where nothing much happens except one exact thing. Footage of a train ride — all of it — for example.

“It’s this crazy idea I had one day in the shower,” Spenrath said.

“If anybody with a cellphone and a cat can get a million hits on YouTube, surely a group of professionals with 4K cameras who can shoot a cat perfectly can make something people would be interested in watching.”

The 45-minute episodic show, currently filming its second season for cable provider Telus Optik, has no narrator, no plot — just kittens being kittens. Tumbling clumsily, purring and exposing their furry bellies as they nap. The stars of the first two episodes of KittenTV were so hot on Telus Optik’s Channel 1 a second season was ordered. It’s being filmed around town, including at the Edmonton Humane Society’s playroom.

Car-sized sets built by Open Sky have so far included Kitten Town — reachable only by hot-air balloon — and for the new season filmed in a basement studio off 107th Avenue, with a napping garden and a Game of Kittens Minecraft playground for the awkward little fuzzballs.

Spennath said he has learned there's a right number of kittens before you stop being able to follow the action — four or five — and that the characteristics of each cat come out quickly. "The villain, the pretty lady," he said, laughing. "One of the big surprises we had after the first season was finding out how much toddlers love it. If we do another season, we're considering doing just toddlers and cats.

"Unadulterated child laughter at kittens is unbelievably cute."

The 14 kittens for the first two episodes this season are being provided by Little Cats Lost Society, which Spennath calls "a great organization that fosters cats and kittens." Adoption counsellor Roxanne Kolmatycki, on set as a general caretaker and herder, said the show helps the kittens find homes. "They get adoption and get to play time on the fun sets. It's great for them."

Spennath said a "lot of the kittens on KittenTV would love to come and live in your home. And if not the ones from KittenTV, ones just like those kittens that we'll totally pretend were on KittenTV."

The small crew is already infected with kitten fever. "I have a feeling we might a whole crew of people that suddenly have cats," Spennath said.

"The director we have this year, Robert Millang, is spending a lot of his time thinking about cats obsessively."

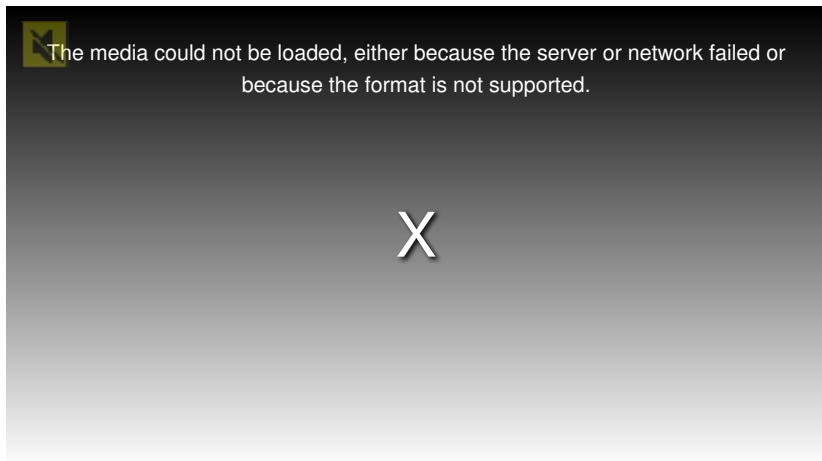
Spennath can't quite explain the show's appeal, but he takes a swipe at the yarn ball. "It's just like the fire log TV, except with kittens — and they're not on fire."

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Instagram / Twitter — <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eQpurZi6e0Q>  
(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eQpurZi6e0Q>)

Little Cats Lost: <http://www.littlecatslostnr.org/> (<http://www.littlecatslostnr.org/>)

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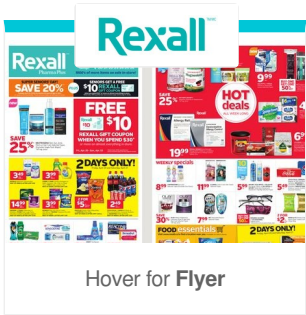
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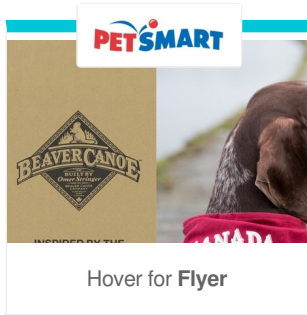
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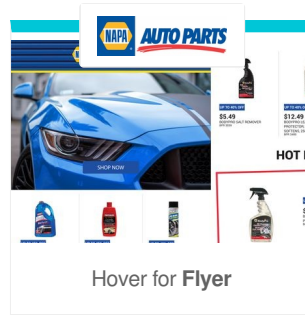
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