

Kitty Porn

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A few weeks ago my wife and I looked for a Russian Blue kitten we could adopt. We found an ad on the "kittensforadoption.us" site with a picture of a cute kitty available in Massachusetts, a few hours' drive from our home in Vermont. We contacted the owner using the REPLY function.

We quickly got a nice e-mail from "Susan Haper" cheerfully telling us

KITTEN FOR ADOPTION

Free kitten to adopt
To adopt for free, a female russian blue kitten.



Cat breed : Russian blue
Fur : Shorthair
Color : Leopard
With pedigree. Vaccinated cat. Sterilized cat.
State : Massachusetts.
County : Barnstable County.
Cat ad published on 09-07-2012

[▶ REPLY TO THIS CAT AD](#)
[▶ SEND THIS CLASSIFIED TO A FRIEND](#)

"Greetings from this end and i'm glad to read back from you.As i said,we have three available 1 male and two female and they are purebred Russian blues.They are 13 weeks old respectively,The male is called Paige and the females are called Shannon and Jessy.i am glad that you want to take one of them."

[All the errors are in the original message.]

I received a phone call a day later by a man with a thick African accent who said he was the husband of "Mrs Susan." I had to return his call, so I used the number I saw on my mobile phone, 385.200.1409. While I was speaking with him on a bad line, another African man interrupted the conversation, which was almost incomprehensible. The caller kept insisting that he wanted my wife's e-mail address, even though she had already received an e-mail response as shown above.

Then we received the following astonishing news: the "Massachusetts" kitties were in Salt Lake City, Utah – more than 3000 km away!

"hi after reading your mail, i was over whelm and wanted no body else to have this my baby except your loving family for they are perfect match to siamese.

they are 4 months old and i am located in salt lake city Utah and i have both male and female of the baby. i will advice since you are a cat lover to take both the male and female to you.

i can them ship to you there in vermont and it is not the first time i will be doing that so you dont have to worry.

also attached to this email are the pics of the male and female. like i said they are for adoption and all you have to pay is for the shipping to you and before sending you this email i had to talk to the

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agency and they told me it will cost you 380\$ for both male and female to be home deliver to you from Utah to Vermont.

they will be needing the following from you: full name, contact number and nearest airport to your location (that is if you will receive them at the airport)

but if you will like for them to be deliver to your home address then you have to add: city and postal code, street name and home address.

originally i had 4 babies as you will see and only the two single photos i am sending of the male and female are left."

At this point, my alarm for "advance-fee fraud" went off and I looked into the situation in detail.

Here are my key findings:

- The phone number (385.200.1409) has over 6,000 hits on Google (try it yourself) for every imaginable kind of animal – including wild animals that cannot legally be raised or traded in the USA and animals covered under the Convention on International Traffic in Endangered Species (CITES < <http://www.cites.org/> >).
- Analysis of the first thousand Google hits for ads using the 385.200.1409 phone number showed that almost all of them were on sites registered outside the USA.

Website	Domain registered in
www.adtob.com	Romania
www.animalssale.com	Ukraine
www.bedfordshire-central-bedfordshire.adtob.com	Romania
www.juneau.adtob.com	Romania
www.kittensforadoption.us	Germany
www.little-rock.adtob.com	Romania
www.usaphonestore.org	Australia
www.usmarketdb.com	USA

- Exactly the same description of the kittens ("With pedigree. Vaccinated cat. Sterilized cat.") generated 5,620,000 hits on the kittensforadoption.us Website *alone*.
- The picture of the nice cat on a blue background was quick to find using Google Images using the search string < russian blue kitten > and turned out to be from a picture gallery < <http://image.arthomedecoration.com/medium/31/russian%20blue%20cat.jpg> >; clicking on "Image Properties" showed that it was from 2009 or earlier.

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- More careful examination of the same page where the original “Massachusetts” kitty was posted showed dozens of cases of identical photographs used for different cats in widely separated areas of the US.

The screenshot displays a grid of ten kitten adoption advertisements. Each ad is titled "KITTENS FOR ADOPTION" and features a small photograph of kittens. The text for each ad is as follows:

- Ad 1 (Top Left):** Free kittens to adopt. To adopt for free, 4 russian blue kittens. Cat breed: Russian blue. With pedigree. Vaccinated cat. Sterilized cat. State: Montana. County: Silver Bow County. Cat ad published on 09-25-2012.
- Ad 2 (Top Right):** Free kittens to adopt. To adopt for free, 3 russian blue kittens. Cat breed: Russian blue. With pedigree. Vaccinated cat. State: California. County: Alameda County. Cat ad published on 09-24-2012.
- Ad 3 (Second Row Left):** Free kittens to adopt. To adopt for free, 3 russian blue kittens. Age: 2 month. Cat breed: Russian blue. With pedigree. Vaccinated cat. Sterilized cat. State: California. County: Los Angeles County. Cat ad published on 09-23-2012.
- Ad 4 (Second Row Right):** Free kittens to adopt. To adopt for free, 4 russian blue kittens. Cat breed: Russian blue. With pedigree. Vaccinated cat. Sterilized cat. State: North Carolina. County: Mecklenburg County. Cat ad published on 09-23-2012.
- Ad 5 (Third Row Left):** Free kitten to adopt. To adopt for free, a female russian blue cat. Age: 2 month. Cat breed: Russian blue. Fur: Shorthair. Phone: 8326028499. State: Texas. County: Harris County. Cat ad published on 09-16-2012.
- Ad 6 (Third Row Right):** Free kitten to adopt. To adopt for free, a russian blue cat. Cat breed: Russian blue. Fur: Shorthair. With pedigree. Phone: 2037157059. State: Connecticut. County: Hartford County. Cat ad published on 09-13-2012.
- Ad 7 (Fourth Row Left):** Free kittens to adopt. To adopt for free, 3 russian blue kittens. Age: 3 to 6 month. Cat breed: Russian blue. With pedigree. Vaccinated cat. State: Maryland. County: Calvert County. Cat ad published on 09-11-2012.
- Ad 8 (Fourth Row Right):** Free kittens to adopt. To adopt for free, 5 russian blue kittens. Age: 3 to 6 month. Cat breed: Russian blue. With pedigree. Vaccinated cat. State: New York. County: Onondaga County. Cat ad published on 09-11-2012.
- Ad 9 (Fifth Row Left):** Free kittens to adopt. To adopt for free, 6 russian blue kittens. Age: 3 to 6 month. Cat breed: Russian blue. With pedigree. Vaccinated cat. State: North Carolina. County: Orange County. Cat ad published on 09-11-2012.
- Ad 10 (Fifth Row Right):** Free kittens to adopt. To adopt for free, 5 russian blue kittens. Age: 3 to 6 month. Cat breed: Russian blue. With pedigree. Vaccinated cat. State: Alabama. County: Houston County. Cat ad published on 09-11-2012.

Each advertisement includes two interactive links: "REPLY TO THIS CAT AD" and "SEND THIS CLASSIFIED TO A FRIEND". The photographs of the kittens are identical across all ads, illustrating the reuse of images for different listings.

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- Using the Neustar domain registration service< <http://www.whois.us/> >, we found that the kittensforadoption.us Web site was registered by a German company supposedly by someone living in Beverly Hills, California. The phone number of the registrant, 213.631.1402, is not a working number.

The pattern fits that of the *advance-fee fraud*< <http://affcoalition.org/> >, also known as the *4-1-9 Nigerian Fraud* (a reference to the Nigerian penal code section covering this kind of crime) in which a sucker is cajoled into believing that (s)he will get something for nothing. The scammers then announce that a fee is required for completion. The request for “shipping” costs for nonexistent cats (unless someone has figured out how to clone the critters) is a giveaway. Had we sent money, we would almost certainly have been told that another, even higher fee was required for completion of the transaction.

We should have been suspicious the moment we determined that the expensive Russian blue purebred kittens were *free* – and included three months of special food! The preliminary encouragement from the illiterate criminals was intended to entangle the gullible victims into a strong emotional connection with the virtual pets so that they would be more willing to send a payment to the scammers.

So in sum, here are some principles we should have applied from the start before getting any further involved in this scam:

1. Before looking into the purchase (or adoption) or anything, immediately use a search engine to scan for identical unusual words, misspellings, or phrases. Look for multiple ads that have identical wording and photographs of the product or animal.
2. If there are photos of the product or creature, check Google Images to see if you can locate identical photos that suggest that the user is simply faking a picture.
3. If there is a phone number available in the ad, search for it using a search engine; be sceptical if there are multiple, mutually-exclusive hits. If someone claims to be in Northumbria and in Suffolk at the same time, something’s wrong.
4. Be sceptical of offers that are too good to be true. Why would someone be giving away expensive products or animals to complete strangers?
5. Never agree to send money in advance of the delivery. There are ways of putting money in escrow (e.g., eBay’s Buyer Protection for payments made through PayPal< <http://pages.ebay.com/coverage/index.html> >) so that neither buyer nor seller can be cheated.

We’re still looking for a cat, but we’re going to the local animal shelter this time.

