

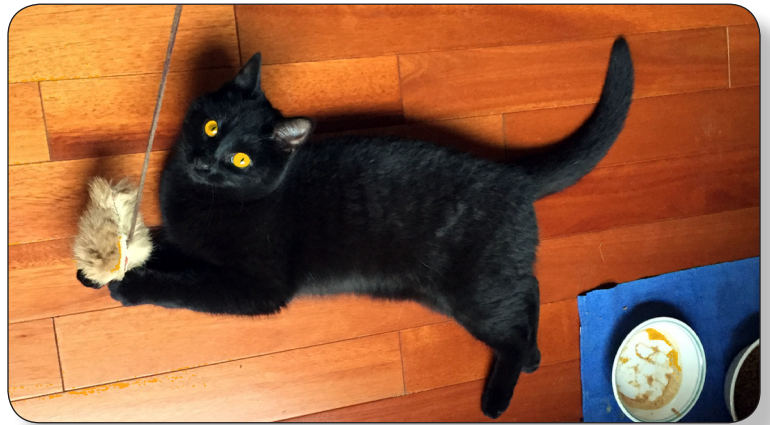
Dexter Kitten  
submitted by Forest McGregor  
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The newest addition to my family of critters was named Chet by the Rogue Valley Humane Society. Chet is a short-hair, male kitten—about five months of age at the time of adoption—with a non-shedding, triple thick black coat, golden eyes and is wickedly intelligent.

My domestic partner and I renamed Chet to “Dexter”—as we both believe that all cats are little sociopaths and Dexter (of the television series by the same name) is the most lovable sociopath we know. Valentino was a close second as well as Voldemort—*he who shall not be named* (from the Harry Potter series)—because choosing a name for this extraordinary cat was a challenge.

Dexter kitten has explored his new home with brazen courage and a determined pursuit of things to hunt and kill. He has no particular fear of our two large dogs and I attribute this—as well as Dexter’s other fine characteristics—to the person who cared for him before releasing him to the shelter. He is a loving and independent feline with special talents and an intellect unchallenged by any cat in this household. Or dog. Or person.

He independently learned to let himself inside the cabin using the dog door; learned to climb a trellis; to get on the roof of the cabin—a two story structure—and off of the roof; and how to climb a ladder. The last was during a short time when we had a ten foot ladder inside the cabin to change light bulbs. Finding his way to the dog flap opening in the sliding-glass patio door—we have two patio doors; only one has the dog flap—was the most remarkable feat of courage and smarts. He had to find his way from the front of the cabin, through the fence to the back of the cabin, past our two large guard dogs, and choose the sliding glass patio doors that had the dog flap opening; and then press his face against that flap and jump into the cabin. Now my other cats, I



### Dexter with the Interactive Mouse toy

had to train them—even the dogs had to be trained to use the pet door! Yet, this Dexter kitten—of less than six months old—has it figured out. Like I said, wickedly smart kitten. And again, I wonder if much of who this kitten *is*, might be attributed to who his last caretaker *was*. It is my hope to let this kitten be as brave and courageous and smart as he can possibly be.

Among the things he loves—besides following me around—are a number of toys; but the best toy is a stick-and-string *thang* I’m calling the **Interactive Mouse** toy. The stick portion of the **Interactive Mouse** toy is flexible and has a leather string attached at one end, and a “mouse” on the end of the string. For a long time, there was no mouse on the end of the string, and Dexter kitten loved the toy just for the string itself. After I made a “mouse”—using a bit of rabbit pelt—and attached it to the end of the string, Dexter kitten found this to be even better. For a time, he even played with the mousey end without any human interaction on the stick end. He would often snag the mousey end so hard, the stick would fly from my hand; at which point, he would proudly make off for the closet—dragging the stick and all—his prey between his killer jaws, to do his ‘gutting’.

Rabbit fur does not hold up well to vicious kitten attack. That mouse was shredded. I made another. That one was shredded. I made another—finding a substantial backing to apply to the skin part of the pelt—mouse, which has endured for several days without falling to shreds. But now the human interaction in play time is of paramount importance to Dexter. He goes wild over this toy—falling on his back, feet in the air, claws extended, mouth open showing all his deadly teeth—I know he is grinning from ear-to-ear. It gives me a surprising amount of joy to watch this Dexter kitten going into the thrall of a killing frenzy over a little tuft-of-fur.



Dexter chases the *Interactive Mouse* toy when it “runs” from room-to-room, jumps and snatches it out of the air when it tries to fly, and looks up at me when it stops doing anything. He *knows* I’m on the other end of the string and *expects* me to play my part in the game. Sure, he wants to maintain suspended disbelief—from the knowledge that the mouse is *not* real—and stay in that ‘pretend’ place where somewhere in his tiny kitten brain, he is getting a jolt of pure ecstasy. Who among us humans wouldn’t push the pleasure button repeatedly if we could? Yet I also suspect there is more going on here in the kitten brain. Here I’m thinking: *he is teaching me how to train him for catching wild things*—as I write this, he has only caught and killed a moth or three—and *he is practicing his martial art*. Good Dexter kitten!

To be sure, let me say that we adore this Dexter kitten and will not allow him to be out-of-doors during the night—he has a curfew, as do all our pets. His health, happiness and belonging are among my aspirations for Dexter kitten; and I am happy to comply with this self-imposed duty. The rewards are priceless when he crawls into bed with me in the middle of the night—complaining of bad dreams—and politely asks if he can please come snuggle with me. We do—me, softly cooing at him, “Dexterino, my little Valentino.”

Forest McGreggor

Addendum: Dexter shares a comfy cabin in the woods with two dogs, two humans, and two additional cats. The cabin is far from any major roads, so he is in no danger of being hit by a car—unless he travels a great distance from the cabin. The cabin is situated in a lovely wooded landscape, and Dexter does not yet know about our wild life inhabitants—well, birds, yes; but not the raccoons, opossums, deer, bear, cougar and others that pass through; ergo, the night time curfew.