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TODAY.com contributor
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Stewie — the world’s longest domesticated cat — has a cancerous growth behind his right eye, a scan last week revealed.

The 48.5-inch Maine Coon cat, who lives in Reno, NV with his owners Robin Hendrickson and Erik Brandsness, became a celebrity in 2010 when the Guinness Book of World Records certified him as the longest domesticated cat, beating the previous record holder by half an inch.

In 2011, Stewie was awarded a second Guinness World Record: His tail measures 16.34 inches, making it the longest tail of a domesticated cat.

Story: World's largest domestic cat stretches over 4 feet

After discovering that the 7-year-old kitty had a swollen eye on Christmas morning, his owners rushed him to an Animal Emergency Center where it was determined he had either an abscess or a tumor. The abscess was removed and scans revealed a mass behind Stewie’s eye that reached into his sinus cavity.

Later that day, Hendrickson posted an update on [Stewie’s website](#) and his Facebook page saying they did not know whether the growth was operable — and that surgery could cost as much as \$3,500 with no guarantee of success.

For Hendrickson and Brandsness, hope for their much-loved record holder came in the form of Mary Jo Barrett, who, after reading about Stewie’s condition in the Reno Gazette–Journal, called with an offer of help. Barrett is the mother of Paul Barrett, the owner of Eye Care for Animals — a veterinary ophthalmology center based in Scottsdale, AZ with satellite offices around the country.

“I boldly called my son and told him he should take care of the cat,” Mary Jo Barrett told [RGJ.com](#).

To Hendrickson, Barrett is an “angel” But the good news did not stop there. Not only was Eye Care for Animals willing to assess Stewie’s condition, they also waived payment for any exams or treatment.

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“We consider Stewie a special case,” Julie Gama, Eye Care for Animals’ public relations manager, told [RGJ.com](#) on Friday.

“He had his evaluation exam on Saturday and it is cancer. On Tuesday they are going to do a biopsy to find out exactly what type of cancer we are dealing with,” Hendrickson told [TODAY.com](#) yesterday, her voice cracking with emotion. “If they can operate and remove whatever they can of the tumor they will. After that, we don’t know. Otherwise, we have maybe two months left with him.”

Story: From Colorado to NYC: Willow the cat reunited with family after 5-year odyssey

Fans of the elongated feline set up a ChipIn fund to help with Stewie’s medical bills and have raised \$2,600 since Christmas. While Hendrickson hopes she won’t need the money thanks to the generosity of Eye Care for Animals, she remains pragmatic in these early days of her pet’s illness. “If we have to go elsewhere (after this course of treatment), I will have to raise money to make that happen.”

Story: Abandoned pit bull's best pal is a Chihuahua

For all his troubles, Stewie seems unfazed. “He is such a sweet boy,” said Hendrickson. “He is acting as if he isn’t sick at all.” Recent updates online reveal Stewie’s behavior remains constant even though there is considerable pressure in his head for which he has been prescribed the animal pain management drug, Metacam.

Stewie’s owners and online fans are not the only people rooting for a speedy recovery. “With him being a therapy cat it makes him quite special in the community,” says Hendrickson of Stewie’s charitable work at the Regent Care Center of Reno. “A lot of people just love him to pieces and he just loves doing it. He’s ready to get back to work if we can sort this out.”



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