

# Heartwarming Recovery Stuns Vets

In a breathtaking turn of events, a beloved family pet defies odds with an astonishing bounce back from a dire medical prognosis, showcasing the power of cutting-edge veterinary medicine and unwavering family love.

**Analysis by Dr. Karen Shaw Becker**

## STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- Toby, a gorgeous 6-year-old Bengal cat, was fading fast when he arrived at a specialty veterinary clinic in the U.K.
- Toby was diagnosed with an enormous brain tumor, which explained his sudden inability to walk and loss of vision
- The cat underwent a 2.5-hour surgery during which a veterinary neurologist removed the tumor “piece by piece from the center outwards”; four days later, Toby had regained his ability to walk and to see the world clearly again
- Toby’s tumor was a meningioma that arose from the lining of his brain; this is the most common type of brain tumor in cats. Most are benign, but create symptoms as they grow and put pressure on the brain

In November 2023, **Toby**, a 6-year-old Bengal cat, arrived at Northwest Veterinary Specialists (NWVS) in Cheshire in the U.K. in very bad shape. NWVS is a leading specialist-led animal hospital. It offers care in anesthesia and analgesia, diagnostic imaging, internal medicine, neurology and neurosurgery, oncology, orthopedics, and soft tissue surgery.

## Toby Couldn’t Walk or See Well, and His Brain Was Swelling

NWVS neurology clinician Rory Fentem described Toby’s situation:

*“When Toby arrived, he was already very unwell. He was unable to walk, was only partially visual, and had very high pressure inside his skull causing his brain to swell and dangerously shift, called herniation.*

*The mass, a type of brain tumor arising from the lining of the brain, was also incredibly large and in a difficult location to access making surgical removal more difficult.”<sup>1</sup>*

According to Toby’s very worried human, Rachel Lee from Whitefield:

*“The tumor had apparently been growing slowly for a long time which enabled Toby’s brain to accommodate the growth.*

*It was extremely worrying, given just how poorly Toby was. Although it was a very stressful time, in a way it was also somewhat reassuring to know there was a cause rather than it being a mystery illness.”<sup>2</sup>*

Fentem led the complex brain surgery to remove Toby's incredibly large tumor.

*"The surgery, called a transfrontal craniectomy, lasted two and a half hours and involved removing the tumor piece by piece from the center outwards to reduce any damage to the nearby brain tissue," he explained.*

## 4 Days Post-Surgery, Toby Was Back on His Feet

Toby rebounded from the procedure like a champ. The speed of his recovery amazed and delighted both Rachel and the veterinary team. Just four days post-surgery, Toby was walking again and could see. Four weeks later, he was almost neurologically normal.

*"Rory and the team did an amazing job in caring for Toby," said Rachael. "Rory kept us fully informed and made sure to explain the processes and our options very clearly. We would regularly receive phone calls to update us on Toby's progress whilst staying at NWVS.*

*Toby, who now has the affectionate nickname of '**Titanium Tobes**' due to the plate on his skull, is settling back into the home really well and is back to having all the cuddles, chin tickles and belly rubs. We were unsure how he would be after having brain surgery, but he is back to his old self, just a slight wobble from time to time."*<sup>3</sup>

## Meningioma Brain Tumors in Cats

Based on Fentem's description of Toby's tumor as "arising from the lining of the brain," we know that it was a meningioma, the most common type of brain cancer in cats.<sup>4</sup> These tumors are usually benign (non-cancerous), but as in Toby's case, they create symptoms as they grow and put pressure on the brain.

A 2015 study looked at survival times in 121 cats who underwent surgery for meningioma.<sup>5</sup> The results showed mortality of only 6% (cats who died during or immediately after surgery). Six cats were euthanized during the course of the study due to confirmed regrowth of the tumor, and an additional 3 were suspected to have re-growth based on a recurrence of clinical signs. A total of 16 out of 121 cats died as a direct consequence of the surgery or tumor regrowth.

Cats that lived for more than one month after surgery had an average survival of over 3 years (38 months), with some surviving more than 4.5 years. Most of these long-term survivors (45/54) did not die from tumor regrowth; many cats in fact went on to die of age-related causes that were unrelated to the tumor.

Additionally, although the average age of the cats in the study was 12 years, the survival times still exceeded 3 years, suggesting that age doesn't prohibit recommendation of surgery for treatment of meningiomas in cats.

The orange tabby in this video is 16-year-old Baby, who like Toby, underwent surgery to remove a meningioma:

## Signs and Symptoms of Brain Cancer in Cats

If your cat displays any of the following signs or symptoms of brain cancer, make an appointment with your veterinarian as soon as possible.

- **Seizures** — **Seizures** are the most common initial brain tumor sign and may involve collapsing, jerking, stiffening, muscle twitching, loss of consciousness, drooling, chomping, tongue chewing or foaming at the mouth
- **Abnormal behavior** — Including increased aggression, loss of learned behavior, depression/dullness and/or lethargy
- **Vision loss** — As happened with Toby, a cat with meningioma may experience reduced vision in one or both eyes, dilated pupils and/or uncoordinated movements
- **Changes in food and water intake** — Increased or decreased hunger or thirst
- **Head or neck pain** — Characterized by head tilting or signs of pain or sensitivity in the neck
- **Restlessness** — Pacing or circling to one side
- **Loss of balance** — Staggering while walking or when standing up
- **Nausea** — Vomiting
- **Other signs of cancer** — For example, weight loss, weight gain, a persistent cough, or a wound that won't heal

## 15 Fast Facts About Bengal Cats

According to Catster:<sup>6</sup>

1. The Bengal cat is a hybrid breed, originating from a domestic male cat and an Asian leopard
2. They love water, swimming and baths
3. They enjoy playing fetch
4. Bengals are extremely high energy and may become destructive if under-stimulated
5. Many are mistaken for wild cats, including the Asian leopard, ocelots, servals and the Savannah cat (a hybrid of the serval and domestic cat)
6. They have strong, powerful bodies, weigh 8 to 15 pounds as adults and tend to be relatively healthy
7. They glitter, or rather, their coats do — the fur appears to shimmer with a glittery coating in the right lighting
8. Bengals are highly social and tend to get on well with both dogs and other cats; however, their strong urge to hunt means they can never be left alone with small animals
9. They are highly trainable and can learn to walk on a harness and leash, perform tricks and participate in feline agility
10. They are exceptionally athletic and enjoy climbing to high places to oversee their territory
11. Bengal cats are often called the "dogs of the cat world" and make great companions for "dog people"
12. They're thieves! Bengals love to steal things, either out of natural curiosity or to get their human's attention
13. They play rough and are known to be biters (especially as kittens)
14. They tend to be quite talkative, chatting up a storm with their humans and meowing weirdly
15. Bengal cats aren't for everyone — they can be multiple generations removed from their Asian leopard ancestor (making them better suited to domestic cat life), or they can be first- or second-generation Bengals who are likely to be less outgoing and more fearful of humans

It's also important to recognize that because they're so closely related to the Asian leopard, a wild animal, it's not legal to own Bengals everywhere. They are accepted in most locations, especially if they are a few generations removed from their wild cat heritage. Early-generation Bengal cats are restricted in certain states. This **information** is up to date as of 2024.

## Sources and References

[Animal Medical Specialists of Seattle](#)

<sup>1,2,3</sup> [CheshireLive, November 1, 2023](#)

<sup>4</sup> [Vetster, Brain Tumors in Cats](#)

<sup>5</sup> [Cameron, S. et al. Veterinary Surgery, 2015 Aug;44\(6\):772-6](#)

<sup>6</sup> [Catster, January 12, 2024](#)

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