



Vet Visit Defense Card

Bring this to the exam room — or read it before you book. Education, not veterinary advice.

7 questions before you agree to anything big

1. What are we treating — and what happens if we wait?

Diagnosis first. Timeline second. "While we're here" is not a plan.

2. Can I see an itemized estimate before you start?

Line items: exam, diagnostics, meds, procedures. No mystery total.

3. Which of these is urgent vs elective?

Ask them to sort the list. Emergency and "nice to have" should not share one invoice vibe.

4. What can wait until morning / next week / a second opinion?

True emergencies are real. Most dental upgrades and "while we're under" add-ons can wait.

5. Why this test — and what will we do differently with the result?

Labs without a "then what" are shopping, not medicine. Ask for the decision it changes.

6. Is this the same recommendation if I decline the loyalty / wellness plan?

Get the full price without the membership first. Plans can be fine; pressure is not.

7. Who owns this practice?

Independent, corporate group, or PE roll-up? Ownership shapes the price book. Ask politely.

Red-flag phrases (pause the visit)

If you hear...	Do this
"While we're in there..."	Ask what happens if you wait and schedule separately.
"We should run a full panel just to be safe."	Ask which values change the plan today.
"The loyalty plan unlocks today's discount."	Get the cash / out-of-plan price first.
"It's just old age." (pain, limp, appetite drop)	Ask what they'd rule out if this were a younger dog.
"We need to sedate / anesthetize today for X."	Ask urgency, risks for your dog's age, and alternatives.
Pressure to decide before you leave on elective work	Walk. Fair clinics can hold a written estimate.
Mystery add-ons you never discussed	Stop. Ask for a corrected itemized bill before you pay.

Dixie note: if the room suddenly feels like a checkout line, it is. Ask why not wait.

Estimate / invoice hygiene

- Itemized or it didn't happen. Exam · diagnostics · meds · procedures — separate lines.
- Ask what can wait. Circle elective items. Approve urgent ones. Rebook the rest.
- Emergency vs elective. ER premiums are fair for true after-hours crises. Elective dental, "while under" add-ons, and wellness-plan upsells are not emergencies.
- Get it in writing before sedation, surgery, or anything over a few hundred dollars.
- Second opinion is normal — especially for surgery, chronic pain meds, or "do everything today."

Senior dog notes (Otis has sat through enough of these)

- Pain is not "just old." Limping, hesitation on stairs, quieter walks, appetite dips — ask what they'd work up if the dog were five.
- Quality of life > checkbox wellness. More tests are not always more care. Ask what changes management this week.
- Anesthesia risk rises with age. Ask about bloodwork before elective anesthesia, monitoring, and whether the procedure can be staged.
- When to ask for a second opinion: major surgery, sudden "end of life" framing without a clear workup, or a plan you can't explain back in one sentence.
- Otis's rule: slow mornings are fine. Dismissing pain as personality is not.

After-hours / ER — brief cues

GO NOW / CALL ER ON THE WAY

- Trouble breathing, collapse, pale/blue gums
- Uncontrolled bleeding or known toxin
- Bloat/hard abdomen + retching (bloat risk)
- Seizures that don't stop; can't pee
- Hit by car, eye trauma

CALL REGULAR VET FIRST (IF STABLE)

- Mild limping or itchy skin flare
- One soft stool; finishing a med early
- "Is this dental urgent?"
- Elective scheduling questions
- When stable — call regular vet first

When in doubt: call. A 2-minute triage call beats guessing in the parking lot.

ONE LINE THAT CHANGES THE ROOM

"Who owns this practice?"

DISCLAIMER

This card is education and lived opinion, not veterinary advice. Every dog differs. It does not diagnose, treat, or replace your veterinarian or an emergency clinic. Practices, prices, and protocols vary. When in doubt, call your vet or ER.

Devin's Dogs · Otis & Dixie · Where good dogs go.

devinsdogs.com · Asheville, NC