A woman brought a very limp duck into a veterinary surgeon's office. As she laid her pet on the table, the vet pulled out his stethoscope and listened to the bird's chest. After a moment or two he shook his head sadly and said, "I'm sorry. Your duck Cuddles has passed away."

The distressed woman wailed, "Are you sure?"

"Yes, I am sure. The duck is dead," replied the vet.

"How can you be so sure?" she protested. "I mean, you haven't done any testing on him or anything. He might just be in a coma or something."

The vet rolled his eyes, turned around and left the room.

He returned a few minutes later with a black Labrador retriever. As the duck's owner looked on in amazement, the dog stood on its hind legs, put its front paws on the examination table and sniffed the duck from top to bottom. Then it looked up at the vet with sad eyes and shook its head. The vet patted the dog on the head and led it out of the room.

A few minutes later the vet returned with a cat. The cat jumped onto the table and also delicately sniffed the bird from head to foot. It sat back on its haunches, shook its head, meowed softly and left the room.

The vet looked at the woman and said, "I'm sorry, but as I said, this is most definitely, 100% certifiably a dead duck."

Turning to his computer terminal, the doctor hit a few keys and produced a bill, which he handed to the woman. The duck's owner, still in shock, took it from him. "$150!" she cried, "$150 just to tell me that my duck is dead?"

The vet shrugged, "I'm sorry. If you had just taken my word for it, the bill would have been $20. But now with the lab report and the cat scan, it comes to $150."