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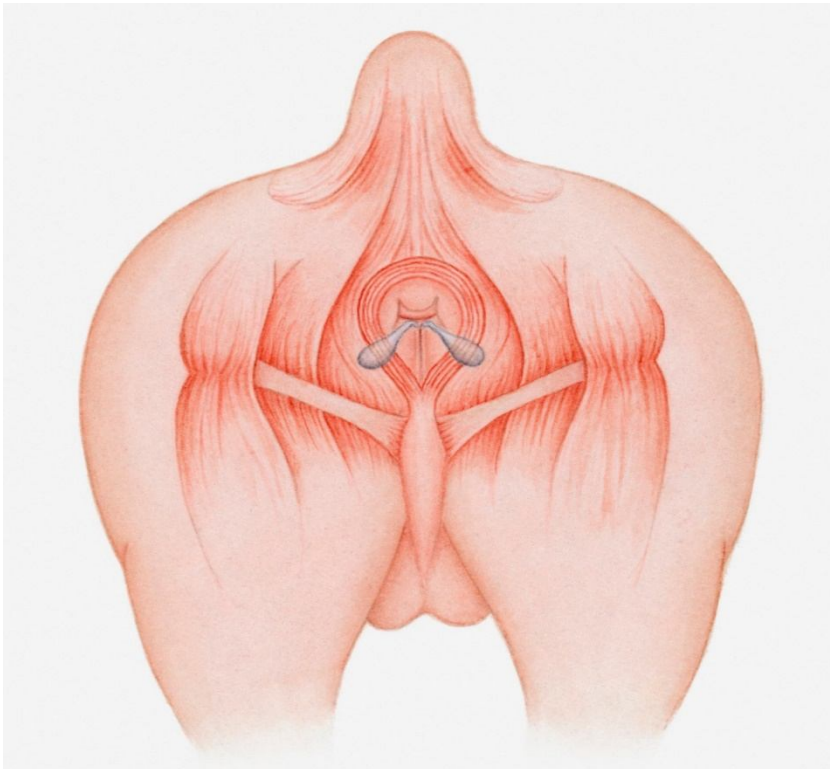
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Anal gland health.



Every dog has two small pea-sized sacs on either side of the rectum, located on either side of its rectal opening.

The material it secretes is extremely bad smelling to us - but not to our dogs.

This is how dogs recognize who has eliminated on their turf.

Whenever your dog defecates, these glands receive a small amount of pressure that releases a tiny bit of the fluid along with your dog's custom-blended scent.

Under normal circumstances, the anal glands are able to function completely on their own without human intervention.

Unless your dog has developed a anal gland problem, it is better to avoid routine expressing of the glands, and let your dog's body function ... the way it was designed to do.

Most people never think about their dog's anal glands until there is a problem with them.

In a few female dogs, this can be due to vaginitis.

Traditionally dog owners have attributed this to "worms".

Worms almost never cause this problem.

Anal gland sacks and functions.

These glands are designed also to provide lubrication when a dog passes a stool, and they then give each dog its own unique scent. Your dog can also express a little of his personal essence when he meets a fellow canine.

Have you ever noticed how two dogs raise their tails on high alert when they first meet?

This action applies pressure to the anal glands, and this leads to the traditional butt sniffing humans cannot seem to fathom.

However, this greeting is as normal to dogs as shaking hands is to people introducing themselves.

Sniffing helps, the dogs learn to identify each other by their scents.

Some other animals (like skunks) – dogs cannot - empty these glands voluntarily for scent marking or in self-defence.

What cause these glad to block up?

Through evolution, the domesticated dog lost some of the need for marking territory.

Domestic animals have largely lost their ability to empty these sacs voluntarily.

Walking around and normal defecation serves in a way to empty the glands but some animals become unable to empty their glands on their own.

The sacs can become impacted and uncomfortable and itching and infected.

If your dog's anal glands fail to express properly, they may actually become impacted and make your dog very uncomfortable.

Signs the glands are impacted.

Your dog begins scooting or dragging his rear across the ground or floor.

Your dog keeps licking or chewing near his rectum.

Your dog's stools have become soft and mushy.

You will likely notice a foul or "fishy" odour coming from your dog's rear.

The material build up secreted into these glands turned to be thick and foul-smelling if not functioning properly.

If you notice, one or more of these signs the sacs need to be emptied.

Reasons for anal gland blockage.

Bacterial infection.

Many dogs never seem to have a problem with their anal glands.

However, bacteria can build up in the anal glands if they do not express properly, and this can lead to an infection.

Left untreated, the infection can produce an abscess, which may eventually rupture through the skin and cause further complications.

Dog diets.

If not feeding balanced raw it is believed that "some" anal gland problems may be linked to the quality of pet food a dog receives.

Inexpensive brands of dog food often use cereal fillers that tend to result in soft stools.

The soft stool is not able to press firmly enough against the dog's anal glands to provide the necessary pressure to express them, and there the trouble begins.

Higher quality dog foods will help your dog produce firmer, more compact stools ... that actually help the glands express, so those foods may be a better food choice for your dog.

What to do about this continuous backside rubbing.

Express the anal glands - only when necessary.

If you are alarmed at this point about all this expressing going on, do not be.

Remember that a dog's sense of smell is light years beyond a human's, so the amount liquid expressed is minute, and you will likely never smell...

anything unless your dog develops an anal gland problem.

Many breeders and owners feel capable of expressing their dog's anal glands themselves.

Your vet are proficient in this technique and could instruct you.

One must never massage harder than one would squeeze a grape without rupturing it.

But, if you notice blood or pus in your dog's anal gland secretions, it is likely a sign of infection, and you should contact your vet for an appointment and treatment.

The anal sacs can be emptied in one of two ways.

Externally.

Prepare a warm, moist rag or washcloth.

Locate your dog's anal glands by raising his tail and using your other hand to feel for two lumps at approximately 8 and 4 o'clock on either side of his anal opening.

Holding the cloth over his anal opening to prevent an unpleasant squirt, begin applying firm but gentle pressure to the sacs ... like pressing a grape between your fingers but not so hard as to burst the grape.

This should cause some of the fluid to be expelled through the rectal opening, thereby emptying the glands.

Wipe your dog's behind clean, and the job should be finished.

If the secretion is very pasty, this method may be inadequate to empty the sacs and you can repeat the squishing a few times – or see your vet.

Internally.

A lubricated gloved finger is inserted in the anus and the sac is squeezed between thumb & forefinger into a tissue held externally. The procedure is repeated on the opposite side.

What if the scooting continues.

If scooting continues after sac emptying, the sacs should be re-checked.

For some individuals, it takes several sac emptying in a row before the sacs stay emptied.

If the sacs are empty and scooting is persisting, another cause (such as itchy skin, tapeworms, or even lower back pain) should be **pursued.**

What happen if I cannot get the sacks to empty?

An abscess can form and rupture out through the skin.

This is a painful, messy and smelly condition often mistaken for rectal bleeding.

If an anal sac abscess forms, it must be properly treated by your veterinarian.

Antibiotics will be needed.

Internal massage of blocked anal glands.

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How often the anal sac should be emptied.

This is a highly individual situation.

The best recommendation is to let the dog tell you when the sacs are full. If the dog starts scooting again ... it is time to do it or visit your vet.

Chronic problem.

What if it becomes a chronic problem all the time?

To avoid the expense of having the sacs emptied, you can learn to empty them yourself at home but most people feel it is well worth ... having someone else perform this service.

Anal saccullectomy.

In other advanced cases, the tubes leading from the sac to the rectum are scarred shut.

In these cases, or when the problem reoccurs again and again ... it is usually recommended to remove the glands surgically with a pre-10 day run on antibiotics.

The surgery causes no ill effects when it is done correctly.

This procedure is complicated by many local nerves controlling faecal continence, the fact that any change in the local musculature ... of the anal sphincter area can affect faecal continence, and the fact that with chronic anal sac problems anatomy is distorted.

Draining tracts can develop after surgery if the gland is not completely removed.

Still, despite these pitfalls anal sac removal is considered a relatively simple surgery by experienced surgeons.

