

UNDER THE WEATHER

The Impact of Anal Glands

Has your dog ever scooted or rubbed his back side on the ground only to leave you wondering why dogs have such funny habits? As one client remarked to me, "Dogs are funny people!! They do such strange stuff."

It's funny and it's cute, but there's always a reason, 'why dogs do what they do'. This particular behaviour is a result of blocked anal sacs. Anal glands are two glands on either side and just below the anus in dogs and cats. They secrete a whitish fluid which could make the hardest amongst us pass out with its smell, but which probably smells divine to them. Anal glands are emptied out when your pet passes his stool, and the smell is an indicator of his age, sex, health status and identification to others of the same species. Sometimes your pet will need help with evacuation of his anal sacs. You can do this if you see your pet scooting. (They may also bite, lick and chew the area around the tail).

Anal glands can be emptied at home if they are not too badly impacted. Here's how: Take a large wad of cotton wool. Keep lots of tissue handy on the floor. Wear a mask around your nose – don't say I didn't warn you about the smell. Lift your dog's tail and squeeze the area around the anus at the 4 o'clock and 8 o'clock positions using the anus as the centre of a clock face. A smelly, white liquid oozes out. If the liquid looks bloody, the anal glands are probably infected and you should seek veterinary attention immediately.

If nothing comes out and your pet continues to scoot, the anal glands are probably badly impacted and need to



**DR SANGEETA
VENGSARKAR SHAH**



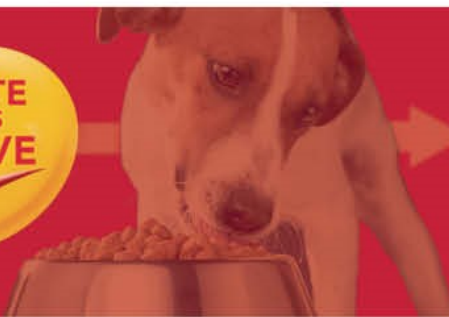
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be squeezed out professionally. Your vet or the attendant will do this job wearing gloves and evacuating the anal sacs through the anus. At times if the impaction is severe or the anal glands are blocked, warm water compresses help to soften the pus and the procedure is tried again after a few days. If the vet suspects an infection, a course of antibiotics is given to clear it. In very severe cases the anal glands may burst and are then treated like an open wound and the sacs are ultimately removed to prevent recurrence. Why do anal glands get impacted? In some cases, there is a genetic malformation which hampers complete evacuation. The other reason is infrequent bowel movements. If your pet gets poor quality, low fibre food or does not have adequate water or fluids, the faeces tend to become hard and infrequent, leading to chronic constipation and anal gland impaction, since it needs regular bowel movement to squeeze out anal gland discharge. If your pet is constipated, discuss the diet with the vet – he/she will recommend a good diet or a stool softener. Make sure fresh water is available throughout the day and that your pet is taken down regularly to evacuate himself (at least thrice a day). For cats it is very important to have the litter tray in a comfortable area as they get stressed out and may not use it as often if it is not in a convenient location. In a multi-cat household, there should be one litter tray per cat, plus one additional tray.

If your dog's anal glands get impacted frequently, ask your vet for a high fibre diet to create bulkier stools. If that doesn't work, and your dog has repeated infections or abscesses from impaction, the anal glands may need to be removed. 



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