



ANAL GLAND DISEASES

ABOUT THE DISEASE

The anal glands are two small glands located on either side of the rectum that produce a clear to yellow foul-smelling liquid.

Normally when an animal defecates, this material is expressed onto the feces as it passes the rectum. Occasionally, animals may also discharge this odorous secretion spontaneously when they are startled or excited.

The most common **anal gland diseases** are:

- **Impaction** – failure of the gland to express, which can cause the gland contents to harden and cause discomfort
- **Abscess** – bacterial infection of the gland, or impaction of the gland duct, usually followed by an impaction or rupture
 - The abscess will cause significant inflammation around the anus and eventually rupture through the skin.
 - Pus and blood on the skin and hair coat around the anus is typically found in later stages.
- **Tumor** – some are benign, but most are malignant
 - Annual examination can help catch masses in their small, early stages, lessening severity of surgery.

Symptoms may include:

- Scooting behavior
- Attempting to lick the anus or under the tail frequently
- Pain while defecating, or even a reluctance to defecate
- Changes in stool appearance – may be flattened or small

OBTAINING A DIAGNOSIS

Common symptoms along with a rectal examination performed by a veterinarian or veterinary technician is the best way to diagnose **anal gland diseases**.

TREATMENT

The simplest short-term solution is to have an internal anal gland expression by a veterinarian or a veterinary technician. Some grooming facilities will perform an external expression, but do not always completely expel the material. At times, sedation may be necessary to express the contents and inspect for other diseases.

If an anal gland abscess is present, patients require sedation to flush the anal gland duct and abscessed material. If the duct is not flushed and remains plugged, then proper healing may not occur and will increase the chances of recurrence.

Depending on the degree of inflammation or infection, patients are often placed on pain medications, anti-inflammatories, and sometimes antibiotics.

If the anal glands require frequent expression, or become impacted or abscessed, a common long-term solution is for the patient to undergo a dietary change. This often means that patients will need to exclude all people-foods, soft treats, fatty chew treats (raw hides, etc.) and certain types of canned foods from their diet. Some patients are placed on prescription veterinary diets to address food allergies or primary gastrointestinal disease.

TIPS FOR SUCCESS

- Frequent anal gland expressions are easy short-term solutions.
- Exclusion of people foods and fatty treats will help with long-term management.
- Anal gland tumors are best treated if caught early, so be sure to request expressions and evaluations annually.