

ORCHARD HILLS VETERINARY HOSPITAL

Anal Sac Disease

Anal sac disease is quite common in dogs and occurs occasionally in cats. It is the most common cause of 'scooting' behaviour where a dog drags its bottom along the ground. If you know that your pet is up-to-date with worming treatment, dragging the bottom on the ground is most likely due to their anal sacs.

What are anal sacs?

Anal sacs (sometimes called anal glands) are small sacs just under the skin on either side of your dog's anus at the 4 o'clock and 8 o'clock positions. They connect to the anus by means of small canals or ducts. (In cats the ducts open on the skin just beside the anus). Their purpose is not known for certain but in wild dogs they are thought to play a role in territorial marking and social behaviour. The sacs contain a foul smelling liquid, much worse than poo!

What causes anal sac disease?

In our pet dogs, the sacs may not be emptied properly. The fluid builds up, solidifies, and becomes an ideal environment for bacteria to grow. Small breeds and overweight dogs are more likely to get anal sac disease.

Symptoms

If you see your dog scooting along on their bottom, it means they have some type of irritation around their rear end. This can be due to fleas, dermatitis or occasionally tapeworms, but the most common cause is full, impacted or infected anal sacs.

Attempts to pass a motion (poo) may cause pain. As a result, your pet may not go to the toilet as often as it should and constipation can occur.

If an infection occurs, pus or blood may sometimes be seen. Your dog or cat may also lick its bottom and show other signs of pain. Left untreated, the sacs can rupture and an abscess will develop around the anus. This will show as a red painful swelling, often with an open sore at the centre. Tumours can also occur in the anal sacs.

Treatment

Impacted anal sacs (by far the most common problem) can be emptied by your vet and this will usually solve the problem. We do this by placing a

gloved finger inside your dog's anus and gently squeezing the discharge out. Not a pleasant task!

In some cases, the problem can recur and repeated emptying is needed. We can show you how to do this yourself but few people take us up on this offer!

Infected anal sacs result when bacteria grow inside the sacs, and this can be more difficult to treat. They may need to be flushed and cleaned under anaesthetic. Antibiotics will be given (either tablets or an ointment into the anal sacs). If repeated severe anal sac disease occurs, we may suggest surgical removal of the sacs.

Prevention

Diet considerations: Increased fibre in the diet may make your dog's droppings more bulky so that the anal sacs are squeezed more often as they go to the toilet.

Obesity increases the risk of anal sac disease (along with many other diseases), so weight loss is important. Lowfat prescription diets that are used for weight loss are also high in fibre.

Ask us for advice on diets and weight loss.