



Resolving the problem of blocked anal glands



DR LARRY VAN NIEKERK

Dr Larry van Niekerk is a veterinary specialist surgeon, veterinary business consultant and speaker. He is founder and Chairman of the Institute for Veterinary Practice Development.

Professional flushing and treatment of infected anal glands or painful abscesses is best performed by your veterinarian, under sedation.

Q My seven-year-old Bull Terrier struggles with blocked anal glands and we have to take her to have them squeezed every two to three months. She also suffers from skin allergies on her stomach and I wonder if the two conditions are connected? The glands are never infected when we take her to have them unblocked and I was wondering if having allergies and scooting, which she does often, can cause anal gland blockages and irritation. Is there any way we can prevent anal gland itching and blockages, or do we have to take her to the vet to have them squeezed every few months? What are the long-term effects of blocked anal glands?

Graham Larson. – Johannesburg

A Your dog's allergy is the most likely reason she scoots as a means to relieve the itching and probably not her anal glands. You can learn to express the anal gland from the outside or even use a glove to digitally express them. Professional flushing and treatment of infected or painful abscesses is best performed by your veterinarian, under sedation.

WHAT ARE ANAL GLANDS?

There is nothing worse than the smell of rotting fish other than canine anal glands, yet this strong smell is naturally released in minute amounts when dogs greet and smell each other and leave their greeting cards to mark territory.

Two small pouches lie just under the skin in the four- and eight o'clock positions and exit through tiny holes just inside the anus. When dogs greet each other, they do so by presenting this odour in small amounts. They also deposit this odour onto the stool when defecating.

Dogs with long coats, especially the toy breeds, find it difficult to keep the anal area clean and are often seen scooting across the lawn or carpet to clean, relieve pressure build-up, or just relieve the itchy irritation.

Most people prefer to have the veterinarian empty these glands, much like a plumber unblocks a smelly drain. However, for those used to DIY, they are very simple to empty, unless of course they are infected and painful.

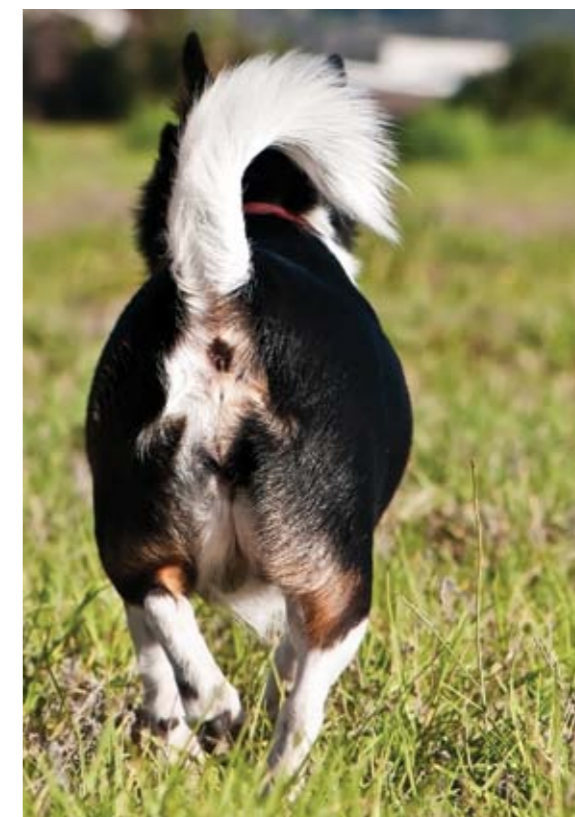
Poor diets result in soft stools and allow accumulation of the smelly discharge, which then hardens, resulting in an impaction. Infection may cause painful abscess formation.

EMPTYING GLANDS

Glands can be emptied in basically three ways – from the outside, using gentle pressure into a warmed cotton wool swab; using a gloved thumb and forefinger and gently expressing the contents into a swab; or professionally under sedation, flushing out the content using an olive-tipped needle.

Infected anal glands are best professionally emptied and treated with painkillers and antibiotics by your veterinarian. Anal glands can also be injected with latex and removed surgically by an experienced veterinary surgeon.

Beware of hardened masses in the anal area which may be cancerous growths called adenomas or adenocarcinomas. 🐾



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