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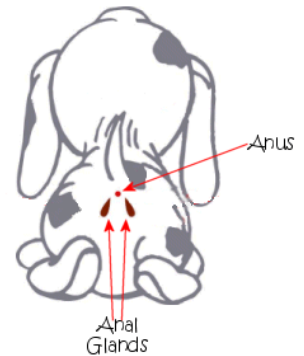
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ANAL SAC DISEASE

WHAT ARE THE ANAL SACS?

The anal sacs are located on either side of the anus at the 8 o'clock and 4 o'clock positions; they are positioned just under the skin. They connect to the anus by means of small canals or ducts. Anal sacs produce and store a brownish, foul-smelling fluid. These are the same glands that a skunk uses to scare away its enemies. The primary purpose of these glands in dogs was likely to impart an odor to the feces for territorial marking purposes. They normally empty with the bowel movements. Problems arise when the ducts are too narrow or the fluid is too thick for the glands to empty on their own. As the fluid builds up and solidifies, it becomes an ideal environment in which bacteria can grow.



COMMON PROBLEMS WITH ANAL SACS:

- 1) **Impaction** - occurs when the fluid becomes thick and solidified.
- 2) **Infection** - occurs when bacteria grow in this material producing a yellow or bloody pus.
- 3) **Abscess** - occurs when the infection builds to create a hot, tender swelling in the gland. Often pressure causes the skin over the sac to break open, leaving an open sore beside the anus.
- 4) **Glands that leak** - occurs when the canals do not close well. These dogs constantly drain anal sac fluid and leave foul-smelling drops wherever they have been.



SYMPTOMS OF ANAL PROBLEMS:

- 1) Scooting or dragging the anal area.
- 2) Excessive licking under the tail.
- 3) Pain or swollen area near the tail or anus.
- 4) Bloody, sticky or foul-smelling drainage from around the anus.

TREATMENT:

The treatment for impaction is to express the sacs and clean out the solidified material. With infections, the sacs must be expressed and antibiotics administered to kill the bacteria. If the sacs abscess, the abscess must be drained and antibiotics administered. For pets with recurrent problems, or for those that just have leaky glands surgical removal is recommended.

SURGERY:

Anal sacs are not vital structures therefore their removal is perfectly feasible. It is the only way to permanently cure the problem and is the only solution for leaky glands.

The most common problem after surgery is irritation and self-trauma. It is a very sensitive area to have an incision and stitches. Many pets require an elizabethan collar to prevent licking. Antibiotics are usually administered after surgery to prevent any infection - the location is not the cleanest, so infection is possible, but uncommon. Rarely, some pets will experience temporary lack of good bowel control.