



Anal Gland Sacculitis

The anal glands are scent glands located on either side of the rectum. They excrete a liquid material onto the animal's feces as it is passing by. This scent acts like a calling card to let everyone know who was there. Smelling the anal glands is how animals say "hello". Some animals, like skunks, have adapted their anal glands as a form of defense, come too close and they will spray them in your direction!

The anal gland is a sac-like structure that produces the liquid material. When the sac is squeezed, such as when having a bowel movement or when frightened, the material will be excreted through narrow ducts that are located at 4 and 8 o'clock relative to the rectum.

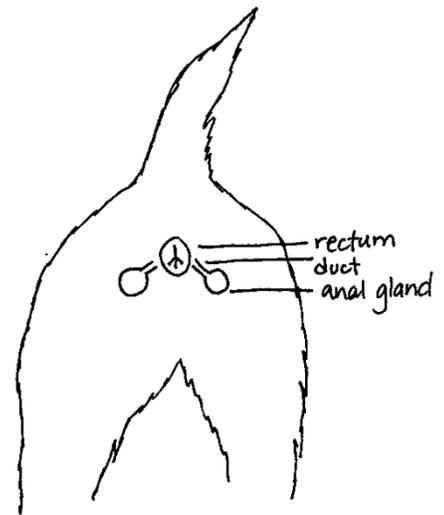


Why do pets scoot?

When the glands become full, the animal may drag their bum along the ground to apply pressure to the glands in hopes of releasing some material. They may also lick or chew at the area to try to release pressure. The pressure causes them to "itch" their bum.

What is anal gland sacculitis?

Anal gland sacculitis is when the anal gland becomes inflamed. This can occur if the gland becomes plugged or impacted and the material is too thick to pass through the duct. It can be secondary to a gland that has become infected or has become an abscess. These glands that are under pressure or abscessed may even rupture through the skin beside the rectum.



Diagnosis and Treatment

Diagnosis is typically made on physical exam and rectal palpation of the gland.



Figure 2: An abscessed and inflamed left anal gland

Mild cases of anal gland sacculitis may be successfully treated with oral anti-inflammatories and antibiotics. Many cases require passing a catheter into the anal gland through the duct so they can be flushed to remove any impacted or infected material and so they can be infused with an anti-inflammatory and antibiotic. Sedation is usually required in order to pass the catheter in this painful area.

Introducing more fiber into the diet with pumpkin can sometimes help increase the fecal bulk to help encourage natural expression of the anal glands. Remember: orange food makes orange feces! If this does not help natural expression, routine anal gland expression is often needed to keep the glands empty.

Figure 1: Location of anal glands in the dog and cat.