



## Anal Gland Information

Full anal glands often irritate small dogs, but they can also be an issue for large dogs and rarely cats. Anal glands are two small pouches located on both sides of the anus that produce a foul-smelling secretion. Animals use the secretions from these glands as “scent markers” to alert other animals of their presence in a certain area. Normally when a dog has a bowel movement, some of this fluid is secreted out of their glands and onto their stools. For some pets, these glands can become overly impacted, causing them some irritation. If you notice that your pet scoots his/her butt on the ground, has a foul odor, or licks his/her rear often, your pet may have full anal glands. Some dogs need their anal glands expressed periodically to relieve the pressure around their anus and provide them some comfort. Anal gland expressions are common and can be performed by veterinarians, veterinary technicians, and groomers who are comfortable with the procedure. Pet owners are often curious as to what they can do at home to help lessen the frequency of anal gland expressions needed. Listed below are some tips to help your pet “self-express” his/her anal glands more frequently:

### Ways to Aid Anal Gland “Self-Expression”:

- **Increasing the Fiber in Your Pet’s Diet**
  - Giving your pet plain, sodium-free cooked green bean treats periodically
  - Adding 1 tablespoon of canned pumpkin to your pet’s normal diet per feeding. Larger dogs can often tolerate 2 tablespoons per feeding.
  - Offering your pet a commercial anal gland supplement according to the feeding directions.
    - These supplements often contain pumpkin extracts and other fiber sources.
    - Examples include Glandex chews or powder, No-Scoot by VetClassics, etc.
  - Transitioning your pet onto a prescription diet high in fiber can be beneficial.
    - Examples include Hill’s Metabolic, Hill’s w/d, and Hill’s Gastrointestinal Biome.
- **Adding Omega Fatty Acids to the Diet**
  - Omega fatty acids are natural anti-inflammatories, which help to lessen inflammation in and around the anal glands.
  - Fish oils are an example of omega 3 fatty acids. You can give your pet \_\_\_\_\_ mg by mouth once daily to aid in anal gland expression.
- **Adding Probiotics to Your Pet’s Diet**
  - Probiotics introduce good gut bacteria into your pet’s digestive system.



- Probiotics also help your pet to produce a firmer stool, which aids in anal gland “self-expression.”
- **Providing Plenty of Fresh, Clean Water for Your Pet to Drink**
  - The more hydrated your pet is, the healthier their colon will be. A hydrated colon produces more regular bowel movements.
  - Dehydration can lead to constipation. Constipation can cause anal glands to become quite full and sometimes painful.
- **Frequent Exercise with your Dog**
  - Exercise stimulates healthy bowel movements, hence promoting anal gland “self-expression.”
  - Taking your pet on 1-2 walks a day can be very beneficial.
- **Maintaining a Healthy Weight for Your Pet**
  - Overweight dogs tend to have more anal gland issues.
  - Your pet’s ideal weight is \_\_\_\_\_ lbs.
  - For tips on helping your pet lose weight, please see the handout on our website titled “Consequences of Pet Obesity.”

Despite taking the above measures for your pet to help them “self-express” their anal glands, some pets will still require regular anal gland expressions by veterinary staff or groomers, which is common. These manual anal gland expressions can be done “externally” or “internally” depending on the comfort level of the individual performing the procedure. Anal gland expression techniques can also be taught to owners who wish to help their pet with this issue.

In extreme or chronic cases, a pet’s anal glands will become abscessed and get so full that they rupture through the surface of the skin surrounding the anus. Anal gland ruptures should be seen and treated by a veterinarian. Please see below for the signs of an anal gland rupture:

#### **Signs of an Anal Gland Rupture:**

- Red skin and/or swelling at approximately the four o’clock and/or eight o’clock positions surrounding the anus (signs of inflammation)
- Possible purulent (infected green, yellow, white, or brown to red) liquid secretions on the skin surrounding the anus
- You might observe a small whole or tear in the skin around the anus.
- Your pet may lick this affected area often or act painful when this area is contacted.

Pets can also scoot their rear on the ground and lick themselves frequently in this area due to other reasons not directly related to full anal glands. If you notice your pet displaying



these behaviors, it is best to consult with your veterinarian prior to initiating any at-home treatments. Please see the list below for other potential causes of your pet's butt-scoting.

### **Other Causes of Rear Scoting, Licking, and Itching:**

- **A parasitic infection**
  - Gastrointestinal parasites can cause your pet to have an itchy rear-end.
  - You may even see tapeworm segments scattered around the outside of your pet's anus.
- **Allergies**
  - Food or environmental allergies can make your pet extremely itchy, especially around their rear-end, face/muzzle, and paws.
- **Masses or Tumors**
  - Pets can have masses form around their anal and perianal areas.
  - The most common masses seen in this area are perianal adenomas (usually benign) and perianal adenocarcinomas (malignant). It is very difficult to tell these masses apart on cytology. Pending the size of the mass, your veterinarian may recommended surgical removal of the mass with the tissue being sent off for histopathology to determine the type of mass present and to evaluate if all of the mass was successfully removed from the area. Surgical removal of these masses could cause fecal incontinence depending on the involvement of the mass with the anal sphincter muscle. Additionally, these masses could grow back post-surgery. So, decisions regarding the surgical removal of these masses should be discussed with your veterinarian.

Sometimes, pets can have such troublesome and chronic anal gland issues that they may need their anal glands surgically removed. This is a complicated procedure, and these cases are often referred to a board-certified surgeon to be performed. Thankfully, this situation is rare, but the possibility needs to be known. Please contact us with any questions or concerns!

\*If you would like more information on anal gland issues in dogs, please see this VCA Hospital's link: <https://vcahospitals.com/know-your-pet/anal-sac-disease-in-dogs>

\*You can purchase anal gland supplements and various high fiber diets through our online pharmacy at this link: <https://elyvetcarepllc.securevetsource.com/index.pml>