

ANIMAL HOSPITAL OF LANESVILLE

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The Unpopular Anal Gland

By Dr. Rene Wingerter

Unfortunately, all dogs and cats are born with anal glands. These are scent glands on either side of the rectum similar to what skunks and ferrets have. Often owners aren't even aware their pet has these, but when your pet is having anal gland problems, everybody knows about it!

The anal glands produce a thick tan or brown liquid with a very strong odor used to leave a territorial marker when the animal defecates. If these glands do not empty like they should, they can become infected and extremely painful. Some causes of anal gland problems could be parasite infections (like tapeworms or whip worms), diarrhea, allergies, obesity, or hereditary defects such as producing a secretion that is too thick or having exit ducts that are too small.

Signs of anal gland problems usually include scooting, licking and chewing the back end, holding the tail down, acting sore in the back end, fever, loss of appetite, gagging or vomiting and a bad odor. If any of these signs appear, have your pet examined by a veterinarian. Treatment often includes emptying the glands and medicating with antibiotics and anti-inflammatory drugs. If these glands become more than just a mild nuisance and cause your pet pain, they should be removed. However, it is usually enough just to have these glands expressed (emptied) on a regular basis ranging from once a month to once a year depending on the individual pet.

To empty the anal glands, raise the tail and put the thumb of your right hand about an inch away from the rectum at the 8 o'clock position and your index finger on the other side at 4 o'clock. Then gently push in and up towards the rectum. If your pet acts painful or you can't get any discharge to express, call your veterinarian. Some pets must have their glands done internally and this is best left to the experts.

We at the Animal Hospital of Lanesville would be happy to answer any questions, just call 952-3643. 