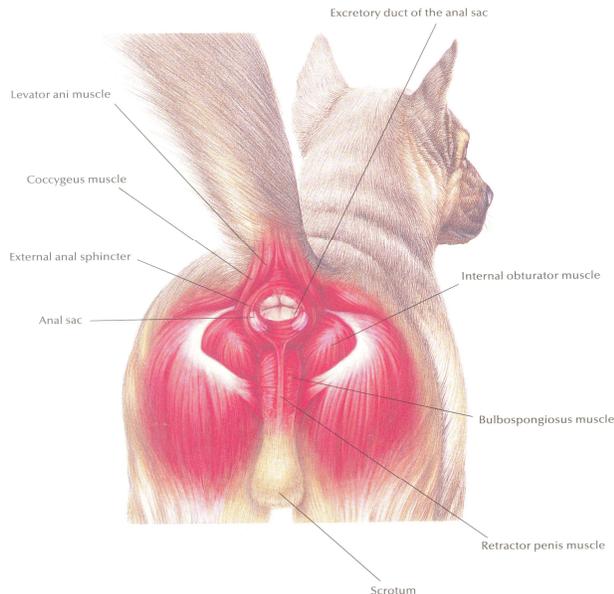


# Sunshine Animal Hospital Client Education Series

## ANAL GLAND DISEASE

### *What are anal glands?*

The anal glands 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 dark, foul-smelling fluid. These are the same types of organs that a skunk has to scare away its enemies. Although pets can use these for the same purpose, most live in an environment that has no enemies. Normally these glands are emptied when your pet has a firm bowel movement. If your pet's stool is softer than normal, smaller than normal or is having diarrhea, the glands may not empty properly; the fluid builds up, solidifies, and becomes an ideal environment in which bacteria can grow.

### *What disorders can occur in the anal glands?*

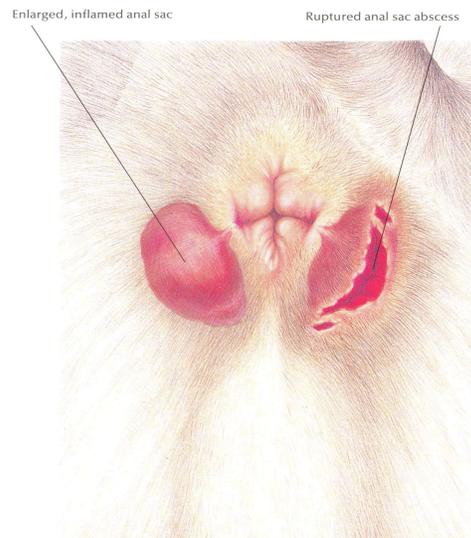
There are three diseases that occur in the anal glands.

- 1) **Impaction:** When the fluid becomes thick and solidified.
- 2) **Infection:** When bacteria grow in this material producing yellow or bloody pus
- 3) **Abscess:** When the infection builds to create a hot, tender swelling in the gland.

### *How will I know if my pet is having problems with its anal glands?*

Symptoms of anal sac disease are:

- 1) Scooting or dragging the anal area.
- 2) Excessive licking under the tail.
- 3) Pain near the tail or anus.
- 4) A swollen area on either side of the anus.
- 5) Bloody or sticky drainage on the side of the anus.



### *How are the various anal gland diseases treated?*

The treatment for **impaction** is to express the sacs and flush out the solidified material. For **infection**, the sacs must be expressed and antibiotics administered to kill the bacteria. If the sacs **abscess**, the abscess must be surgically drained and antibiotics administered.

### *My pet has had several bouts of anal gland disease. Is there a long-term cure?*

Although rare in cats, many dogs have recurrent anal gland disease. Some breeds of dogs, such as Poodles, commonly have problems. The anal glands of obese dogs do not drain well, and thus these dogs are predisposed to recurrent problems. If a dog has several episodes of anal gland disease, the anal glands can be removed surgically. Because these glands are virtually unused, there is no loss to the dog. It is the only way to permanently cure the problem.