



DOGS

When Frequent Expressing of Anal Glands Isn't Enough

The *anal glands* are paired glands that are located at the "4 and 8 o'clock" positions under the skin at the sides of the anus. They are small - about the size of a pea - and are not normally visible to the eye although they can be felt by someone familiar with their location. They produce and contain a smelly liquid that, during the course of the dog's evolution, was used to mark territory when a small amount of this liquid was released as the dog had a bowel movement. These glands still exist today, in both dogs and cats, although the need for territorial marking has become less through domestication. However, these glands continue to produce this foul smelling liquid and are prone to problems. *Scotting*, the act of a dog or cat dragging their bum along the ground (usually your favourite carpet!), is an often seen symptom that anal gland problems may be beginning.

When *anal gland* problems are suspected, other causes of foul odors should be eliminated such as ear, lip, or skin infections, or flatulence. It may be time for your veterinarian to take a look at these glands as they are prone to infection that often results in increased gland liquid production and hence the need for more frequent emptying. Its also helpful to have your veterinarian comment on the ease with which the glands can be expressed and the best method of doing this. Some groomers have also been trained and are qualified in expressing anal glands as well. For some dogs, the glands can be expressed externally, for others the glands may need to be expressed by way of a rectal examination. If the glands are relatively easily expressed and not infected, and if you are up to the job, have your veterinarian teach you how to perform this procedure at home. It is a relatively simple procedure and once you have a supply of rubber gloves, not all that uncomfortable for you. However, a word of caution, this can be uncomfortable for our pets and you should always do this with assistance at home. You should also reward your dog for his patience afterwards.

As these glands are normally emptied during the act of having a bowel movement, you may find a diet change would help. Often, increasing the fibre content to produce a bulkier stool may result in fecal material that is more effective at emptying these glands during defecation.

For glands that becomes *chronically infected*, sometimes the only other alternative is to have the glands surgically removed. However, control through medical means should always be the first choice.

