

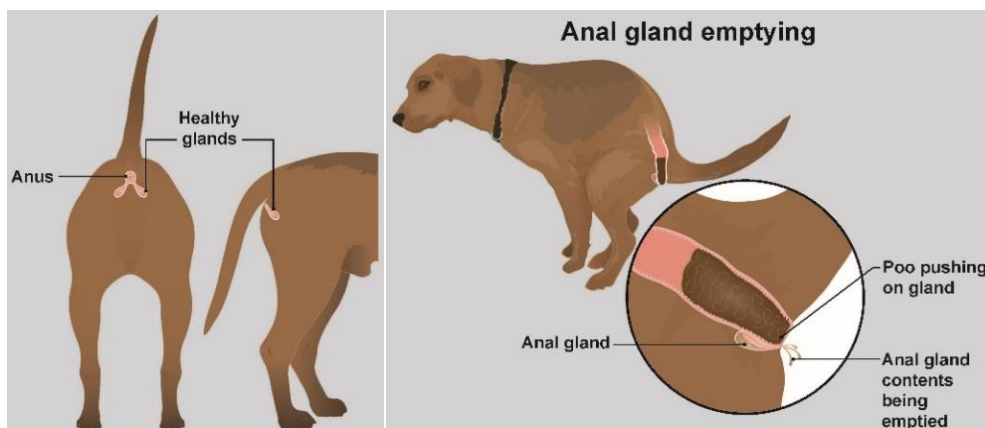
## Blocked anal glands in dogs

### Overview

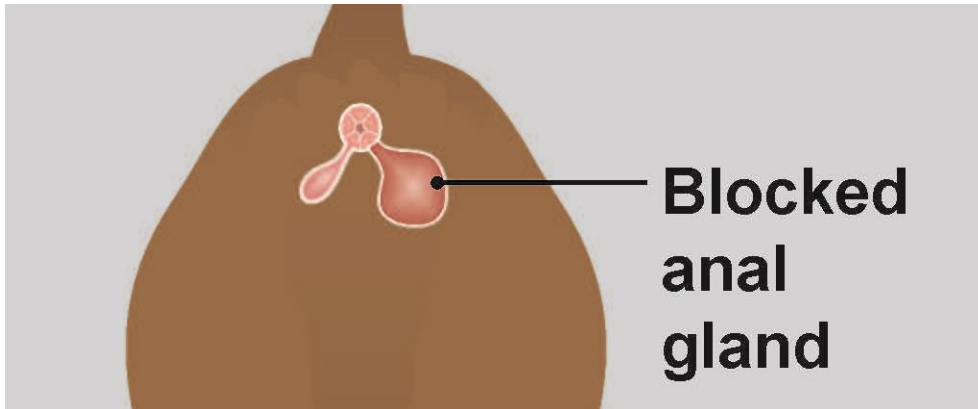
- The anal glands are a pair of small sacs that sit just inside the anus (bottom). They contain a strong-smelling liquid used for marking territory.
- Healthy anal glands empty naturally when a dog poos, but if this doesn't happen, they can over fill and block.
- Blocked anal glands are irritating and painful, but often quick and simple to treat.
- Contact your vet for an appointment if you think your dog has blocked anal glands. Left without treatment, blocked glands can lead to more serious problems.
- Never try to treat an anal gland problem yourself; you could cause serious damage and pain.

### General information

The anal glands are a pair of small sacs that sit just inside the anus. They contain a strong-smelling liquid used for marking territory. Healthy anal glands empty when a dog poos (see image below).



Blocked anal glands are a relatively common problem and in most cases, are simple to treat. Left untreated, blocked anal glands can lead to more serious problems such as infections/abscesses.



Any dog can develop blocked anal glands but it's more common in overweight dogs (weak muscles around the bottom), dogs born with narrow anal gland openings (makes emptying difficult), and dogs that have ongoing diarrhoea/soft stools (anal glands rely on firm, bulky stools to push past and empty them).

## Symptoms

Symptoms of a blocked anal gland include:

- Scooting - rubbing the bottom (anus) on the ground
- A foul, fishy smell
- Nibbling and licking the anus and/or lower back
- Pain when pooing
- Suddenly sitting down in discomfort
- Looking round at their back end suddenly

**Check out our video:** 'How to recognise anal gland problems in dogs' [www.pdsa.org.uk/blockedanalglandsindogs](http://www.pdsa.org.uk/blockedanalglandsindogs)

## When to contact your vet

Contact your vet for an appointment if you think your dog has blocked anal glands, leaving them untreated can easily lead to infections and

abscesses. **Find out whether you are eligible for free or low cost PDSA veterinary treatment using our checker below or visit [www.pdsa.org.uk/eligibility](http://www.pdsa.org.uk/eligibility)**

## Treatment for blocked anal glands

Blocked anal glands are often simple to cure:

- **Emptying.** Your vet will feel inside your dog's bottom and try to empty their glands. Never attempt to do this yourself unless you have had instruction from your vet, and you are confident doing so - anal glands can burst if they are squeezed too hard or in the wrong way.
- **Medication.** Medication such as anti-inflammatories and/or antibiotics are only usually necessary if your dog's glands can't be unblocked, are very painful, or have caused an infection/abscess.
- **Surgery.** If your dog has ongoing anal gland problems that can't be cured with emptying or medication, your vet may recommend flushing them under anaesthetic.

## Outlook

If your vet manages to empty your dog's anal glands, this is likely to provide instant relief and solve the problem.

## Prevention

There are a few simple precautions you can take to reduce your dog's chance of anal gland problems:

- **Keep your dog slim.** Overweight dogs generally have weaker muscles around their bottom which makes gland emptying more difficult. Keep your dog at a healthy weight and feed them a good quality complete dog food.

- **Regular checks.** If your dog frequently suffers with blocked anal glands, they may require regular vet/veterinary nurse visits to have them checked. You will quickly become an expert at spotting the signs of an anal gland problem developing.
- **Fibre.** Adding extra fibre to your dog's diet can help to firm-up and bulk-out their poo. As a result, when your dog goes to the toilet their stool will press on the anal glands and help to empty them. Sugar free bran flakes or bran powder is often the best way to add fibre to your dog's diet. Speak to your vet for more information.

## FAQ's

### **Should I have my dogs anal glands emptied routinely?**

Not unless there is a problem. If your dog has healthy anal glands, leave them alone, there is no need to have them examined or emptied unless they are causing discomfort.

### **Should I have my dog's anal glands emptied at the groomers?**

It's common for anal gland squeezing to be offered at grooming parlours but it's unnecessary unless there is a problem. Always seek veterinary advice before having your dog's glands emptied.

### **How do I empty my dog's anal glands?**

If you want to learn how to empty your dog's anal glands yourself, speak to your vet for advice. It should never be done without instruction and can cause serious problems if done incorrectly.

Published: Feb 2020