

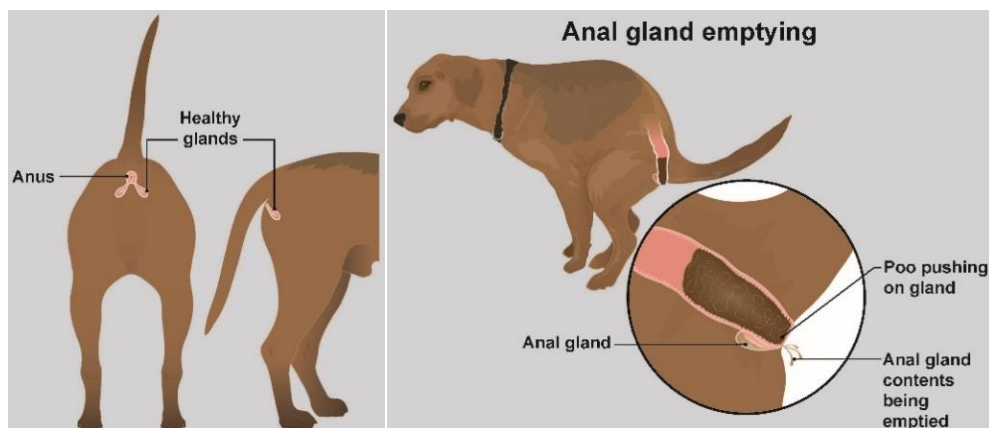
Anal gland abscesses in dogs

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.
- The anal glands empty themselves as a dog poos, but if this doesn't happen, blockages, infections and abscesses can develop.
- Anal gland infections/abscesses are extremely painful and can burst through the skin if they aren't treated quickly.
- Contact your vet ASAP if you think your dog has an anal gland abscess.
- Never try to treat the problem yourself; you could cause serious damage and pain.

General information

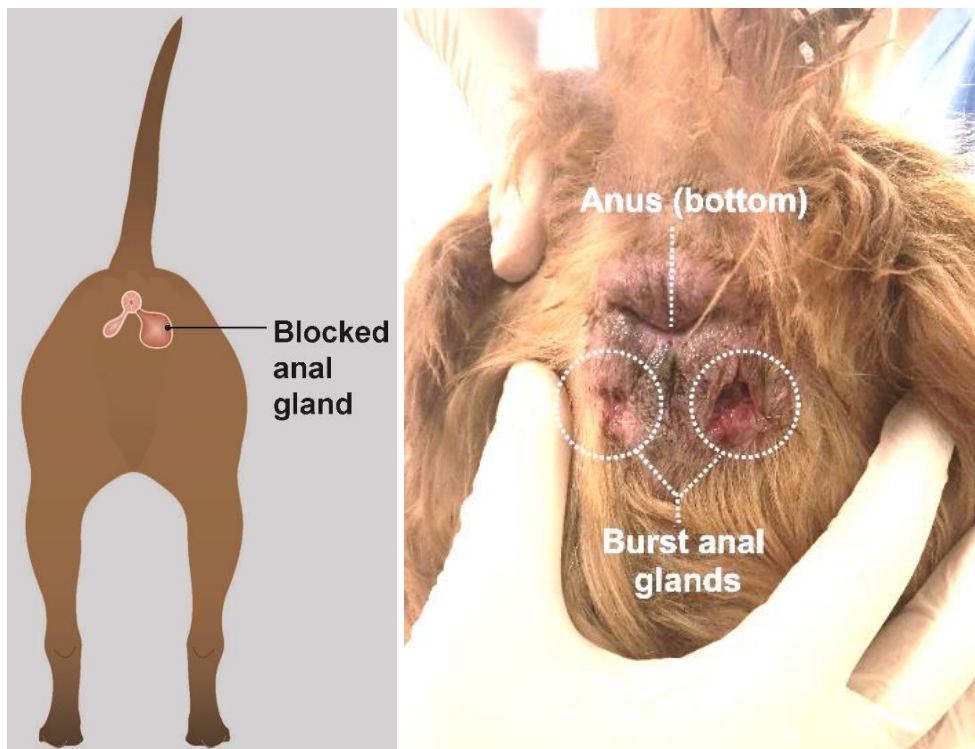
The anal glands are a pair of small sacs that sit just inside the anus. They contain a strong-smelling liquid used for marking territory. Healthy anal glands empty themselves everytime a dog poos (see image below), but if this doesn't happen, they can block, form an abscess, and even burst (see image below).



Symptoms of an anal gland abscess

- A red, swollen bottom
- Scooting (dragging their bottom along the ground)
- Pain when pooing
- Nibbling and licking the anus and/or lower back
- A foul, fishy smell
- Suddenly sitting down in discomfort
- A wound near their bottom
- Discharge, blood or matting around their bottom
- Eating less and/or having low energy (lethargy)

Check out our video: 'How to recognise anal gland problems in dogs' www.pdsa.org.uk/blockedanalglandsindogs



Both of this dog's anal glands have burst because of abscesses.

When to contact your vet

Contact your vet for an appointment ASAP if you suspect your dog has an anal gland abscess/infection, it's a very painful condition that can get worse if it's left without treatment.

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

Treatment for an anal gland abscess

Medication. Often, a dog with an anal gland abscess is too painful to examine until they've had a few days of medication. Your dog is likely to need anti-inflammatory pain relief and antibiotics to fight the infection (unless the gland has burst open, in which case antibiotics are often unnecessary).

Emptying. Never attempt to empty an infected anal gland yourself. After a few days, once your dog is more comfortable, your vet may try to gently examine and empty their glands. It's often very difficult to empty infected anal glands (because of pain and inflammation), it has to be done carefully so not to burst them.

Further investigations. If the problem doesn't go away, or returns after treatment, it may be necessary to take a swab from the abscess to determine which antibiotic is best for your dog.

Surgery. If your dog's glands are too difficult or painful to empty despite medication, your vet may recommend flushing them under anaesthetic. If the problem keeps returning, surgery to remove the affected gland(s) may be recommended, however this is a last resort because surgery around your dog's bottom has a high risk of infection and complications.

Burst anal gland treatment

Once an abscess has burst and is open to air, it's will be much less painful.

Keep it clean. Your vet will clip your dog's fur and clean the area thoroughly. At home you will need to use warm salty water and cotton wool pads to clean the area twice daily, and after every poo. Your dog will need to wear a buster collar (protective head cone) until their abscess has fully healed. Do not allow your dog to lick the area, the bacteria inside their mouth will make the problem worse.

Medication. If your dog is painful, they will be given anti-inflammatory pain relief. Antibiotics are often unnecessary once an anal gland abscess has burst open.

Outlook and ongoing care

Most anal gland abscesses heal within a week of receiving treatment from a vet as long as they are kept clean and there are no complications. If your dog has ongoing problems with their anal glands they may need to be emptied on a regular basis. Your vet will tell you if, and how often your dog's anal glands need to be emptied.

Prevention

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 suffers with repeated or severe anal gland problems, they may need regular vet/veterinary nurse visits to have them checked. You will quickly become an expert at spotting the signs of an anal gland problem starting.

Fibre. Adding extra fibre to your dog's diet will help 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.

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