

# VICTOR HARBOR AND GOOLWA VETERINARY SERVICES

## TALKING ANIMALS

### ANAL GLANDS

“He’s scooting and chasing his tail. He’s been wormed, but he is still rubbing his bottom on the ground”. A common factor in this scenario in dogs and cats is full anal glands. The anal glands are scent glands situated in the five o’clock and seven o’clock position either side of the anus, closely associated with the ring of sphincter muscle around the anus. When the animal passes faeces, some of the gland matter is squeezed out of the tiny canals exiting from each gland and acts as a scent marker. The normal secretion from these saccular glands is a brownish liquid, which is sometimes granular. It has a highly unpleasant pungent smell.

If the faeces are not bulky enough, or are passed infrequently, the glands fill up with matter and become uncomfortable. The animal rubs its bottom on the ground to try to relieve the discomfort. Indeed, this can sometimes unblock the tiny entrance to the glands and allow the matter to pass. If the contents are not released and irritation continues, the animal may chew at the fur on the rump and tail. Some animals tend to lick elsewhere on their body, including the front feet. Female animals rubbing their bottoms may get soil contamination or grass seeds caught in their vulva.

If the glands remain blocked for an extended period, the liquid contents can become dryish and then impossible to pass. Bacteria build up in the matter, and may eventually produce an abscess, which is extremely painful. If untreated, the pressure inside the abscess may cause it to rupture out through the skin beside the anus.

Risk of anal gland overfilling is increased by obesity and by high meat diets that tend to result in thin stringy faeces.

Other possible causes of bottom scooting or chewing in the area are intestinal worms, faeces sticking to the hair in the breech area and fleas causing irritation in the skin on the rump and tail.

Treatment is by manually expressing the glands initially, and then adjusting the diet to either increase the roughage content and bulk of the remaining faeces (eg with grated raw carrot), or increasing the raw bone contents to firm up the faeces, depending on the previous diet. If the glands have become impacted and abscessed, a course of antibiotics may need to be given, accompanied by surgical drainage. Persistent and repeated abscessation may be resolved by surgical removal of the glands. This is a last resort, because the nerves working the muscle around the anus may become damaged, causing paralysis of the muscles. Faecal incontinence or the uncontrolled passing of faeces may ensue.

If you wish to have your pet’s anal glands checked, please ask the veterinarian during your next consultation.

See you soon.