



## ANAL SAC DISEASE

The anal sacs are located on either side of the anus just under the skin at the 5 o'clock and 7 o'clock positions. They connect to the anus by means of small canals called 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 and mark territory. Although dogs use their anal sacs for the same purpose, most domestic dogs have no need to mark territory or repel predators. Because the sacs are rarely emptied, the fluid builds up, solidifies, and becomes an ideal environment for bacteria to thrive.

### *What diseases occur in the anal sacs?*

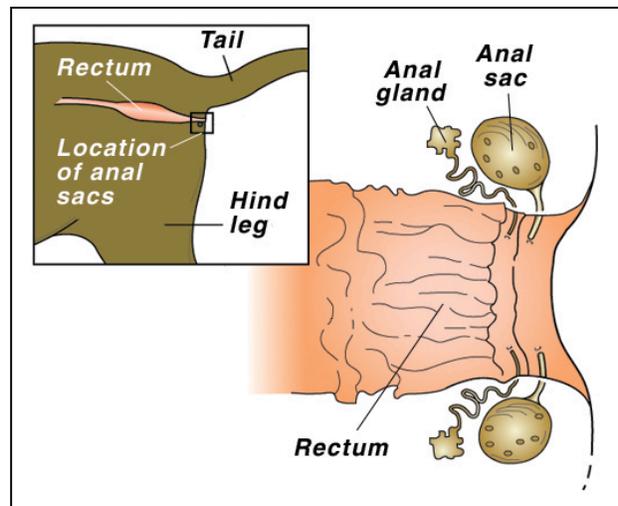
There are three diseases that occur in the anal sacs.

1. When the fluid becomes thick and solidified, the condition is called **impaction**.
2. When bacteria grow in this material producing yellow or bloody pus, the condition is called **infection**.
3. When the infection builds to create a hot, tender swelling in the gland, the condition is called an **abscess**. When the abscessed material overflows the sac or the duct leading to the sac becomes obstructed, the skin over the sac breaks open, and the pus drains onto the skin.

### *What are the clinical signs?*

Symptoms of anal sac disease are:

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



### ***How are these diseases treated?***

The treatment for **impaction** is to express the sacs and clean 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.

### ***How likely is it for anal sac disease to occur again?***

It is not very common for dogs to have recurrent anal sac disease. However, some dogs will have chronic anal sac problems. Some dogs may need to have their anal glands expressed on a routine basis depending on the severity (every couple of weeks to every few months). If a dog has several episodes of anal sac disease, the anal sacs can be removed surgically. Surgery is the only way to permanently cure the problem; however, there are some risks involved. Please schedule an appointment with the veterinarian to discuss possible complications if you are thinking about having this procedure done.

### ***Can anything else happen to anal sacs?***

Some dogs are born with anal canals that do not close well. These dogs are constantly draining anal sac fluid and leaving a foul-smelling drop wherever they have been. This is an indication for anal sac removal. There does not appear to be any other way to stop this, and these dogs do not outgrow this problem.