

Ask A Vet: Boot Scoot Boogie

Sunday, January 22, 2017

Dear Dr. Weldy's,

My dog is constantly scooting his back end on the ground and licking back there. It is so gross! What is going on with him?

-Scooter's Mom

Dear Scooter's Mom,

It sounds like your pet may be suffering from a common ailment we see in dogs and cats called anal sacculitis (anal sac/gland inflammation). Anal glands are a pair of glands on either side of the rectum that are reservoirs for secretions that are generally expressed when the dog defecates. Any change in the consistency of the secretions, changes in muscle tone, changes in fecal consistency can cause the sacs to overfill and plug up. The secretions ferment and can cause inflammation and infection.

Signs that your dog might have an anal gland issue include:

- Licking or biting the area
- Scooting
- Reluctant to sit down
- Four odor from the area or very bad breath (from licking)
- Straining, difficulty going to the bathroom or bloody discharge
- Firm, reddened swellings around anus

A variety of diseases can have similar signs, so it is important to see your veterinarian if you suspect an issue with your dog's anal sacs. Anal itchiness can be seen with a variety of dermatologic, psychological, nutritional and gastrointestinal diseases, such as perineal fistulas/hernias and food allergies. Anal sac tumors are also possible.

Your veterinarian will likely "express" the material from your dog's glands. If your dog is painful, or there is significant infection in the glands, she will likely offer to do this procedure with sedation to alleviate your pet's pain. Abscessed anal glands will require flushing, pain medications and antibiotics. Warm compresses may help as well. Chronic anal sac inflammation or abscesses may require removal of the anal sacs by a surgeon. Your veterinarian will likely recommend weight loss (if your pet is overweight), treating the primary disease (if an underlying issue, such as a food allergy is the cause of the anal gland disease), increasing insoluble dietary fiber and adequate physical activity to stimulate normal bowel movements and natural expression of the anal sacs.

Routine anal gland expression with bathing or grooming is NOT recommended – repeated manipulation and potential trauma to the area can lead to chronic anal sac disease. If your dog has anal sac disease that requires expression regularly, ask your veterinarian if she can teach you how to express your dog's anal sacs at home without causing excess irritation and inflammation to the area.

If you suspect your dog has an anal sac or other issue, please schedule an appointment with your regular veterinarian so they can recommend a treatment plan that will be right for your pet.

-Dr. Ashley Vander Wey