

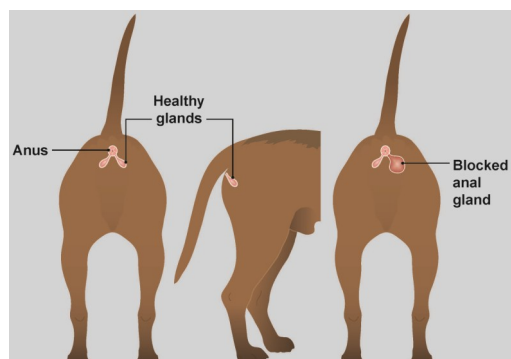
COMPANION ANIMAL NEWSLETTER– FEBRUARY 2022

Anal Gland Issues in Pets



The main function of our pet dogs/cats intestines is to transport and digest their food, absorb the nutrients they need and remove waste products. Unfortunately in some of our pets this can be a very delicate balance that can be easily upset, resulting in increased water and fibre in the stools presenting as diarrhoea, or decreased water and fibre content presenting as constipation.

One of the consequences that commonly occurs from unbalanced digestion is problems with the perianal sacs, commonly known as anal glands, (although they are not actually glands). A lot of us don't even know about these sacs let alone where they are, until there is a problem.



Anal glands are sacs that sit either side of the anal sphincter, they are lined with glandular epithelium that secretes a creamy coloured pungent exudate containing pheromones onto the animal's faeces to scent territory. Movement of faeces out of the rectum is controlled by the anal sphincter and as long as the animal is passing a reasonably firm, formed stool the sphincter will help to squeeze the anal glands empty onto the stool as it passes through.

If our pet is unfortunate enough to suffer from an episode of diarrhoea these anal glands may not fully empty and become impacted, this can lead to secondary infection, abscesses in the glands, or even rupture, resulting in infected contents leaking into the tissues around the anus.

Anal gland disease can also be secondary to conditions such as skin and dietary allergies. Signs of anal gland irritation can include chewing at the rump/tail area, rubbing the perineum on the ground particularly after defecating, and licking the anal area more than normal which can result in your pet having a fishy, foul-smelling breath. If the anal glands become chronically diseased they may have to be surgically removed.

If you think your pet is suffering from anal gland problems seek veterinary advice to rule out any other complications, we can also advise on diet to help reduce gland irritation. Increasing fibre into your pet's diet can help normalise stool consistency and bulk leading to natural anal gland expression and improved gut health.

There are other things that you can do to help your pet such as feeding a high quality gastrointestinal or hypoallergenic diet, plenty of access to fresh water to help hydrate your pet, and regular emptying of the anal glands. We stock a variety of these diets at the surgery.

If you require any further information please don't hesitate to contact the surgery and speak one of our veterinary nursing team.



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PET INSURANCE

Pet insurance is something we are often asked about. We are always here to help and support our clients who wish to claim on their insurance, however, due to FSA regulation we are not able to make recommendation, or give advice or opinion about, specific companies or policies. Owners often ask us which company is best or which should they avoid? Should they insure their pet? Which policy should I get? These are all questions we cannot answer, however, perhaps the most important consideration is not who to insure with, but rather that you understand the choices of policy and that you have chosen the right cover for your own individual circumstance and pet. Insurance cover for your pet can offer financial peace of mind, should the unexpected happen. There is no NHS for pets and owning a pet does come with the accompanying responsibility of being able to afford veterinary care should they be injured or taken ill. Pet insurance is a contract between yourself and your insurance company, it is your responsibility to fully understand all exclusions, limitations and terms of your own insurance policy and please remember any fees claimed are ultimately your responsibility.

In veterinary practice, just as in human medicine, the profession continues to evolve and for some conditions advanced treatments may be an option. Sometimes options for treatment may be prohibitively expensive for owners who are not insured. At an emotional and worrying time when a pet is ill, we will of course always work together with you as a team to do what is best for the animal and always offer all the options for treatment, but having insurance in place can help owners to be able to focus purely on the treatment options without the worry of their cost.

So where to start? Although as already stated above we cannot advise you on the specifics of pet insurance here is a general overview of considerations to research or discuss further with an insurance provider when considering pet insurance.

Although policies come branded in many different ways and can have many different terms and conditions (read the small print), they do tend to fall into one of the following categories:

- ☐ **Lifetime Cover** – Lifetime cover is the most comprehensive pet insurance on the market and pays out for ongoing issues your pet may have throughout its lifetime. There are two main types of lifetime cover: Per condition per year cover, and annual lifetime cover.
- ☐ **Maximum Benefit** - Maximum-benefit pet insurance gives you a pre-set amount to spend on each injury or illness with no time limit.
- ☐ **Annual** – Annual Cover has a time limit of one year. Policies can vary with some classing the start of this annual period as being from the first date the problem was noticed by the owner, and others from first date of treatment for the problem.
- ☐ **Accident Only Cover**– Does not cover illness, only accidents.



Further impartial information on the variations of policy and all things pet insurance can be found at: <https://www.which.co.uk/money/insurance/pet-insurance>

Is there a deferment period at the inception of the policy? Most cover is not immediate. Beware claims can also be time critical, with terms stating that any claim must be submitted within a set number of days from the start of the illness or injury.

Excess fees can also be very different from company to company. Fixed excess amounts can differ and will apply per policy year and usually per condition. In addition to a fixed excess many policies have an additional co-payment/percentage excess. If this percentage is high and the treatment is of high cost or long duration then the amount of additional percentage excess to be paid by the policy holder is going to also be high. This can also change with the age of the pet.

Another important consideration is the medical history of your pet. Pre-existing conditions will not be covered by any insurance company, regardless of whether they have ever been previously claimed for or not. It is important to be transparent with your pet's health history when taking out the insurance, should you claim then they will always request full clinical history (usually for the life of the pet where available), before assessing the claim. Also remember if you have had a break in lifetime policy cover then any conditions prior to the break will now be classed as pre-existing and be excluded.

In summary pet insurance can provide owners with financial peace of mind and can take away the financial considerations when presented with treatment options for a pet at what can be a very emotional and difficult time. The insurance that is right for one pet is not necessarily right for another, so it is very important to do the homework, fully understand the contract you are entering into and to take out what is right for you and your pet.



Check out our website www.daleheadvetgroup.co.uk for more information about caring for your pet, special offers, vet and staff profiles and much more!

