

**Dear Dr. Wise,**

**Question:** Our dog Hagrid has a serious problem with scooting his hind end on the ground, carpet, everywhere!! I have heard that this may be caused by worms. I used a dewormer I bought from a local store but he continues to scoot. My neighbor said that there could be a problem with Hagrid's anal glands being too full. I have never heard of anal glands. Could this possibly be Hagrid's problem?

**Answer:** Anal sacs (also called "anal glands") are two small glands just inside your pet's anus. The material secreted into these glands is thick and foul smelling. Normally walking around and normal defecation will cause the glands to empty. Some animals become unable to empty their glands on their own at all. The sacs may become impacted and uncomfortable. Dogs with impacted anal sacs usually scoot their rear on the ground in an attempt to empty the glands. Some dogs will lick their anal area and other dogs will chase their tails. Cats often lick the fur off just under their tails.

Your veterinarian will be able to determine if impacted anal sacs are the cause of Hagrid's scooting and relieve the impaction by manually expressing the sacs. This should make Hagrid feel much better. If scooting continues for more than a few days after sac emptying, the sacs should be re-checked. For some patients, it takes several sac emptyings in a row before the sacs stay emptied. If the sacs are empty and scooting is persisting, another cause should be pursued.

If Hagrid's anal sacs are not expressed, an abscess can form and rupture out through the skin. This is a painful, messy and pretty smelly condition. If an anal sac abscess forms, it should be properly treated with antibiotics prescribed by your veterinarian.

Some animals may require frequent visits to their veterinarian to express the anal sacs. If this happens, a non-invasive technique that helps some patients is a change to a high fiber diet. It may be suggested that feeding green beans or pumpkin several times a week, along with their regular diet, may increase the fiber intake. This will produce a bulkier stool that may be more effective in emptying the sac as it passes by.

If the sacs need to be emptied every few weeks or more, you may have a question about having the sacs permanently removed. This procedure may have some complications which may cause fecal incontinence as a result of nerves or muscles being injured during the procedure. Draining tracts can develop after surgery if the gland is not completely removed. However, anal sac removal is considered a relatively simple surgery by most board certified surgery specialists.

If you have a question, write Dr. Wise, Indiana Veterinary Medical Association, 201 S. Capitol Avenue, Suite 405, Indianapolis, IN, 46225, or [www.invma.org](http://www.invma.org).