

VETERINARY CORNER

by Phil Kress, DVM



Dr. Phil & Stella

This month let's talk about a medical problem that is more common than you might think. How many times have we observed dogs scooting/dragging their bottoms along the ground, your carpet, or the floor? In practice we see several causes, which I'll try to enumerate.

There is sometimes a true itch/scratch reaction occurring that involves either an allergic reaction, an irritant present, or sometimes the presence of fleas that are biting and causing a secondary allergic flare or direct irritation. Of course identifying the flea and initiating a plan to eliminate them is the cure. If a general allergy syndrome is present, finding the cause (i.e. corn in

the dog food in my own dog's case) and/or treating with anti-inflammatories and therapeutic shampoos usually helps. Direct chemical irritants can be washed away.

In the case of long-haired dogs, fecal or urine contamination or build-up can cause severe skin irritation, cutaneous infection, and if it's summertime, fly maggot activity under the hair mats. Trimming the hair, treating the skin with topical ointments and antibiotics heals the problem.

At the rectal-skin border, located at 3 and 9 o'clock, are two small openings leading to the anal glands (sacs). These are pea to grape sized glands containing a fowl, personalized smell that is excreted onto each bowel movement. Ever wonder why dogs are always smelling those fecal piles? The skunk has perfected the art of shooting the same type of glandular material at any threatening foe foolish enough to get too close! These glands cause the most common reason in dogs for rear end distress. Often the content of these glands becomes dried or thickened and causes impaction. As the pressure builds up it becomes irritating and the dog tries to evacuate the gland by "scooting". Often the dog is brought into the clinic with the complaint of having a "funny smell" and irritation/agitation. We relieve the problem by manually expressing the glands. The owners are shown how to do the procedure (if they're willing!) during bathing. If the problem becomes chronic we will then surgically remove the glands.

Lastly, in some cases, an impacted anal gland will lead to secondary infection and/or rupture. Have you ever heard the expression "sore as a boil on your butt"? These are very painful and need medical attention or they can become chronic draining sores. The "boil" is lanced, if not already ruptured, flushed and cleaned, and antibiotics given. Generally the area will heal in about 10-14 days.

Well, now you know why your hunting dog, or Grandma's poodle, goes scooting across the lawn or carpet. It can be a terrible nuisance, but in most cases very curable.

The heat of the summer is upon us. Make sure your four legged friends have ready access to lots of cool, clean water.