



# Dog and small animals vet



**Dr Adam Gordon**  
Maroubra Veterinary Hospital

Adam Gordon graduated from the University of Sydney in 1990. He completed a Masters degree in Veterinary Studies at Murdoch University in 2002. Adam has been in companion animal practice since 1990 and is principal of Maroubra Veterinary Hospital.

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This edition, Dr Adam looks at a problem that can be a real pain in the bum for some dogs.

Fans of the vet and author James Herriot would remember the hilarious tales of his client Mrs Pumphrey. Mrs Pumphrey was a very wealthy member of the English upper class. Her little Pekingese dog 'Tricky Woo' was ridiculously spoilt and treated like royalty. He was also regularly afflicted by a mysterious ailment that she referred to as 'flop bot'. "Oh Mr Herriot" she would plead over the telephone, "you must come at once it is an emergency. Tricky has gone flop bot again". Mr Herriot very much enjoyed his trips to Mrs Pumphrey's estate, because he was also treated like royalty, fed gourmet food and given fine wine to drink.

The mysterious condition that Mrs Pumphrey called flop bot, was actually a condition known in the veterinary game as 'impacted anal sacs'. It has also been referred to as 'blocked glands'. Pet owners whose dog's have had this condition would understand why Mrs Pumphrey called it flop bot. Impacted anal sacs results in intense itchiness and irritation of the anal area. Affected dogs commonly flop their bottom on the ground and then pull themselves along the ground with their front legs. This is called scooting.

Anal sac impaction is one of the most common conditions veterinarians are called upon to treat. Despite this, relatively little is known about the problem and the anal sacs themselves. All carnivores (except bears) have them. Exactly what their function is remains undetermined. There is some evidence that they are used by animals in gender recognition. It is also thought that the scent is used in territory marking. Skunks use their anal glands to spray the foul-smelling fluid as a defence against predators.

What we do know, is that the anal sacs are located underneath the skin on either side of the anus. There are glands in the wall of the sacs that produce the liquid that makes up part of the content of the sacs. Anyone who has been present when the sacs are emptied by their vet will attest to the extremely foul smell of this liquid.

As for why some dogs end up having problems with their anal sacs, this is also not known. Normally, the sacs empty when the dog defaecates. Some of the factors that may contribute to failure of anal sac emptying include obesity, poor muscle tone in the anal area (more common in small dogs), and soft stools or chronic diarrhoea.

So what can you do once you know your dog is cursed with anal sac problems? Well there are a number of options. Firstly, if they are not causing a problem leave them alone. Frequent emptying of the sacs in asymptomatic dogs can cause more problems with the anal sacs. Secondly, if your dog is overweight, start him or her on a weight loss program.

If your dog is scooting, ask your vet or dog groomer to empty them for you. If you are so inclined, they can also show you how to empty them. My experience is that once shown how, the vast majority of pet owners have absolutely no interest in doing the job themselves which is not surprising as vets also hate the job!

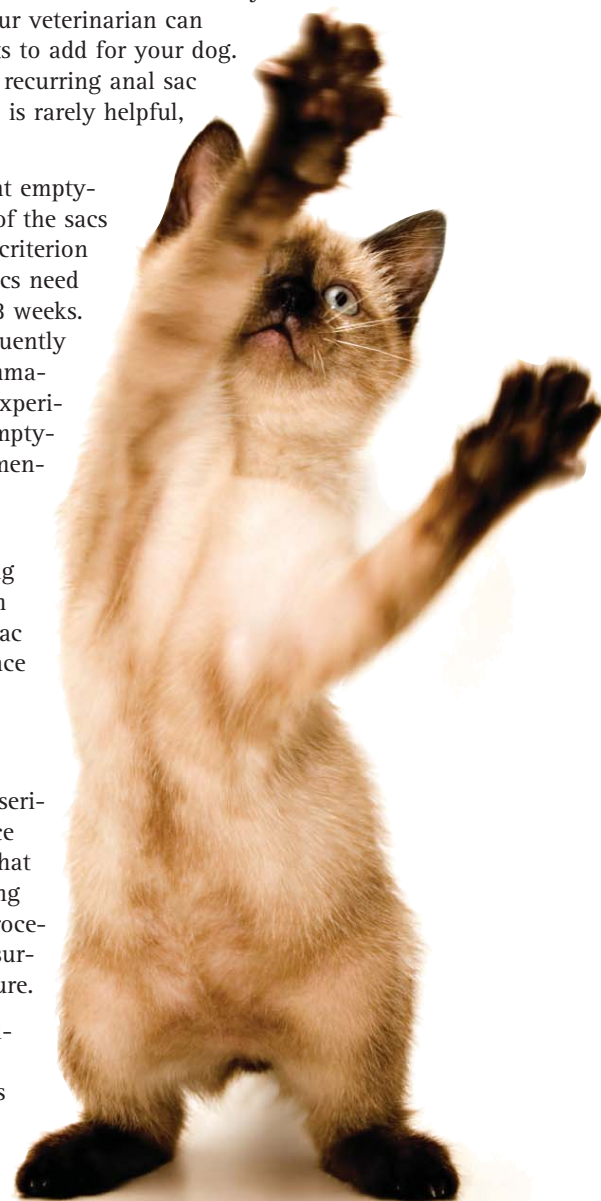
Increasing the amount of fibre in your dog's diet will result in larger bulkier stools. Theoretically this should aid in emptying of the anal sacs when your dog defaecates. If your dog's anal sacs are becoming impacted frequently this is worth trying. Psyllium\* husks (eg. Metamucil™) and unprocessed bran are ideal dietary additives for increasing stool bulk. Your veterinarian can advise you on the appropriate amounts to add for your dog. My experience is that in the dog with recurring anal sac impaction, increasing the dietary fibre is rarely helpful, but it is still worth trying.

Finally, for the dog that needs frequent emptying of its anal sacs, surgical removal of the sacs (anal saccullectomy) is warranted. My criterion for recommending surgery, is if the sacs need emptying more than once every 6 to 8 weeks. Manual emptying of the sacs this frequently can cause further irritation and inflammation. It is also not the most pleasant experience for the dog and the process of emptying the sacs manually does cause momentary discomfort.

It would seem that the anal sacs are an optional extra on dogs, as removing them does not cause any problems. On the contrary, dogs with chronic anal sac problems are usually much happier once they have been removed.

Like any surgery, there are potential complications that can arise from the procedure itself. The most potentially serious complication is faecal incontinence resulting from damage to the nerves that control the anus. The key to minimising the risk of this is to ensure that the procedure is performed by an experienced surgeon who is familiar with this procedure.

\*Editors note: Psyllium is readily available from your supermarket and costs just over \$5.00 for 200 grams whereas Metamucil™ is over \$15.00 for 285 grams. Always add to cold liquid or food as it gets weird and gluey in hot products.



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# Cat vet



**Melissa Catt BVSc**  
Paddington Cat Hospital

Melissa graduated from the University of Sydney in 1990. She worked in a private small animal practice in Adelaide for two years and then in England for a further two years. Melissa continued in private practice on her return to Sydney before starting Paddington Cat Hospital with her husband, Randolph Baral in 1997. Melissa is interested in all aspects of feline medicine and has a particular liking for soft tissue surgery. Of course, Melissa was nominatively destined for feline medicine.

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## Dr Catt Examines the Problems Faced with Cat Fight Abscesses

Aaahh, Summer- the time of year when we all spend more time outdoors, swimming, lazing, barbequing..... and our cats do too- lazing, catching lizards and fighting with other cats! This is the time of year that vets see the most injuries in our patients, and in cats, the most common injury we see is skin abscesses due to fighting.

Cats fight more during the warmer months partly because they are physically outdoors more, but also because there is more mating behaviour at this time of year. Even cats that have been neutered seem to feel springier in the spring and summer, and there tend to be more spats over territory. Males are definitely more prone to fighting (blame the testosterone!), in particular non-desexed toms, but any cat that has access to the outside can potentially end up with an abscess. The laziest, most peace-loving cat in the world might end up on the receiving end of an aggressive territory snatcher!

An abscess is a pocket of pus that forms in any tissue, and is made up of bacteria and white blood cells. In the case of fight abscesses, they most often occur under the skin of the head, legs, tail base or back. They are caused by either a tooth or claw penetrating the skin, and then depositing bacteria (bacteria from the skin itself, but particu-

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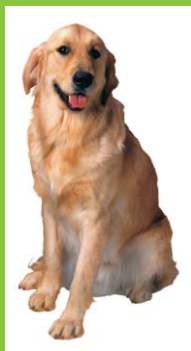
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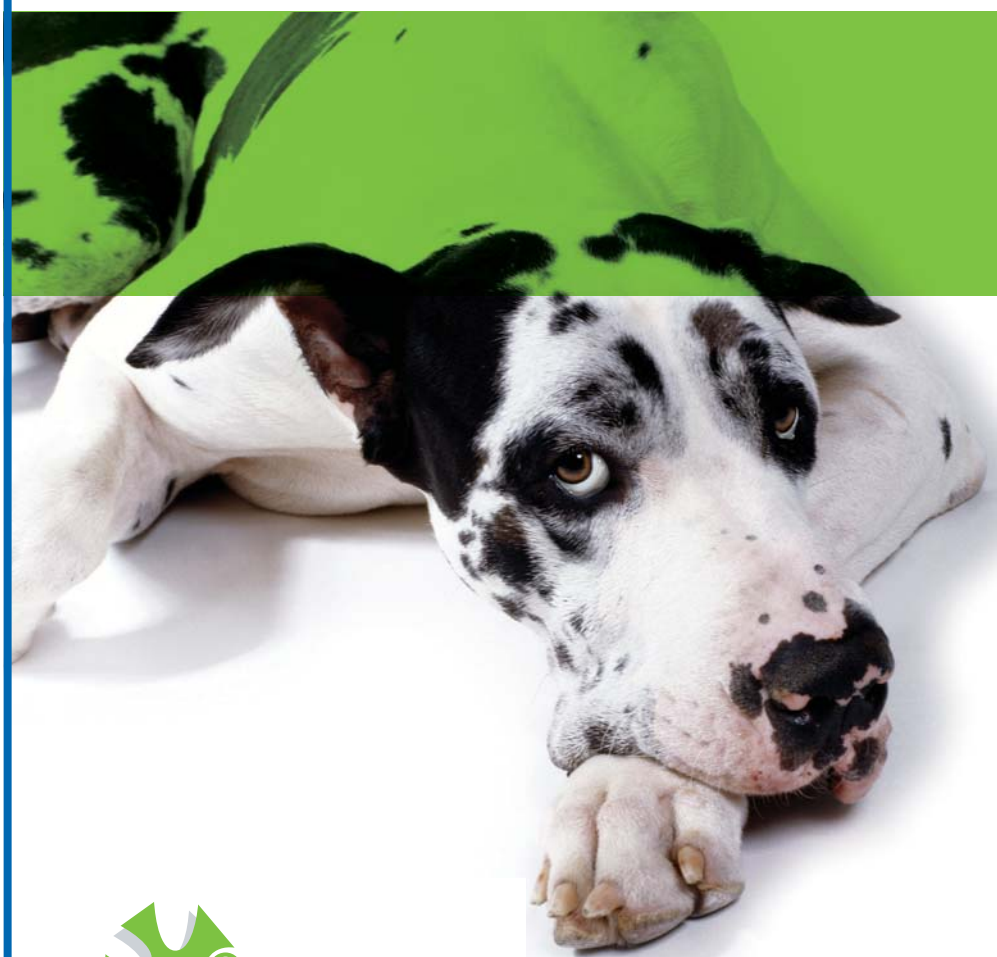
larly from the mouth or claw- both areas where lots of germs usually reside). Usually the wound seals over within a few hours, often leaving no visible trace of the scuffle that has occurred. As the bacteria multiply (which occurs more readily once there is no air available), and the number of white cells increases, there will be swelling, redness and heat. The degree of swelling depends on a number of factors, including the overlying skin tension, the amount of available space, and gravity.

The affected area tends to be exquisitely painful, but as most cat owners know, cats tend to hide their injuries very successfully, so it may not be immediately obvious that your cat has an abscess. Usually there will be a fever, and consequently he will be off food and tend to lie around a lot more. If the abscess is on the head or face, it is easily seen; if it is on one of the legs he is likely to be lame. An abscess at the base of the tail may make him reluctant to hold and use his tail normally. There may be no obvious signs if it is around the body, as there is more skin available and it is quite elastic.

Drainage may occur spontaneously or may only occur after surgical lancing. The discharge is creamy yellow to red, occasionally greenish (yuck!), and has a foul smell. The signs of illness usually improve after the abscess has discharged.

Continued on the following page...

# All the benefits of castration...



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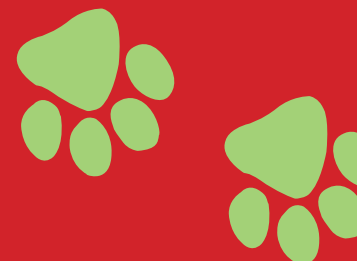
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Sometimes we can see more serious sequelae to abscesses. If the abscess occurs near a joint or bone, the infection may spread to these organs and the cat can develop septic arthritis or osteomyelitis. Infection can enter body cavities if the bite is deep enough and cause infection in the chest ('pyothorax') or abdomen ('peritonitis'), and occasionally hernias can be seen. An untreated infection of the face or head could lead to meningitis, although this is very uncommon.

Some infections can be passed on by bite wounds, the most serious and common being FIV, or Feline Immunodeficiency Virus. This virus has highest prevalence in older male cats who have had outdoor access. FIV is related to HIV (the cause of human AIDS), but there are some important differences and the virus is not transmittable to humans.

Treatment of an abscess depends on the area infected, the size of the abscess and whether it is already draining. The hallmark of treatment is the use of antibiotics, so it is important that you are able to do this- if you have trouble giving your cat tablets for example, don't hesitate to ask your vet (or vet nurse) to give you a lesson. The initial dose should be given as an injection which has faster efficacy, and then the rest of the course is usually given orally. Some oral antibiotics are specifically designed to be pal-

atable and many cats take them crushed in food, or you may prefer a paste. If all else fails, it may be worth asking for your cat to board at the vet's for a few days to ensure he gets his medication.

Treatment may be a simple matter of giving the area a quick clean up in consultation and the cat a course of antibiotics. If the problem is recognized early and treatment instituted immediately then there is more likely to be early simple resolution of the infection. More serious abscesses will require an anaesthetic and surgery to drain the pocket of pus, and often a rubber drain (a 'Penrose drain') is sutured in place to allow any further build up of fluid to drain out of the wound rather than reforming an abscess. More complicated cases may need radiographs ('X-rays') to determine bone or joint involvement, or more involved surgery, for example to repair a hernia. If you are concerned about FIV infection, then a blood test can be done to check for this.

The only sure-fire way to prevent your cat from ever having an abscess is to keep kitty completely indoors. Otherwise an awareness of the signs to look out for is important so you can take him straight to the vet for appropriate care and hopefully have a happy, healthy cat sooner!

# Bird & exotics vet

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**Dr Alex Rosenwax - BVSC MACVSc (Avian Health)  
Bird & Exotics Veterinarian, Green Square.**

Alex graduated from the University of Sydney in 1991. He achieved Membership of the Avian Health Chapter of the Australian College of Veterinary Scientists in 1996. In November 1996 he opened the first and only Sydney all bird and exotic pet practice. The Clinic moved to 1 Hunter St Waterloo in 2003 and sees approximately 80% birds, and 20% fish, reptiles and other exotic pets. Alex is the current president of the Australian Veterinary Association Avian Group.

**Shop 3, Block D, 1 Hunter St Waterloo, Sydney 2017**  
**Phone: (02) 9319 6111**  
**Website: <http://www.birdvet.com.au>**



The new bird should be kept in a separate room to all the other birds. If you keep your birds outside then it should be placed in a cage as far away as possible from all the other birds. Wild birds should also be prevented from coming into contact with quarantined birds. If you are letting your bird out for a fly don't let them land on each other's cage.

**Other precautions** that should be taken include feeding the new bird and cleaning its cage after all the other birds have been fed and their cages cleaned. All seed and other waste should be removed and disposed of away from your existing bird.

**The length of quarantine** is a minimum of six weeks. If the bird is sick during this time then the quarantine period is extended by a further six weeks and the illness investigated.

For exotic (overseas) birds the quarantine period may be longer. In some cases the new highly valued bird may need to be protected from infections of your other birds.

Some pet owners are reluctant to keep the bird separate for the six-week period. These owners often only keep the bird separated for approximately one week. This is **not** an appropriately safe period of quarantine to prevent infections. This period only allows for examination by an avian veterinarian and for the obvious *display of a bird's already present clinical signs*.

**Signs to look for** during quarantine are: any changes in the bird's behavioural patterns (especially its eating habits) are observed and any change to these or any clinical signs of disease are noted and treated.

**Once you have the new bird at home it will need to be examined and some simple treatments administered. These include:**

- Before entering the quarantine period the bird should be weighed and its general health checked.
- The bird should be examined and treated for mites and lice at the beginning and end of quarantine.
- The bird should be wormed at the beginning and end of the quarantine period.

**It is generally recommended that in the first 3-14 days of acquiring your bird that an avian veterinarian performs a veterinary check. The veterinarian will:**

- perform a general health check of the bird
- check for mites and lice
- perform a microscopic examination of the faeces and crop to look for worms, coccidia, megabacteria and motile protozoa (trichomonas, giardia and coelsozoma)
- often test the bird and/or prophylactically treat it for psittacosis (chlamydia)
- often offer more advanced tests that may be needed for highly valued birds. This may include disease tests for Psittacine Beak and Feather Disease (Pbfd) and Polyomavirus. Blood tests for biochemistry and haematology may also reveal underlying illnesses.
- also assess the behaviour of the new bird and its suitability to be with your other bird(s)

The majority of treatable problems will be detected during the six-week quarantine period. Many untreatable viral diseases may also be detected simply because of the bird's abnormal behaviour during quarantine. However a small number of diseases, especially some viral diseases with long incubation periods, will not be detected.

The quarantine period is a great time to get to know your new bird and train it before it meets your other bird(s).

Once your new bird has been through the quarantine period and has been judged to be healthy you can then consider having the two birds meet each other. There are various ways to introduce them.

This may include putting them in the same cage, putting the cages next to each other or introducing them in a neutral territory area. Some birds may take up to a few months to warm to each other. In a small number of cases they may permanently be in separate cages next to each other. This is still okay as they will still be able to keep each other company in the daytime while you are out and make them both feel more secure.

**H**ave you ever found a stray bird or acquired a new bird as a companion for your existing pet bird? Did you find within 1-8 weeks that either the new bird was sick or the other birds in the cage or aviary were unwell? The new bird may have brought in a new disease or have been infected with a disease that was already present in the aviary. As birds "mask" the signs of disease until they are very sick, the bird may have looked good at the time it was acquired but may have been harbouring a disease. Quarantining new birds is the way to protect all your birds. The problem is that, unlike for cats and dogs, there are no vaccinations for most pet bird diseases, so quarantine is the only way to protect your pet bird.

So if there are so many concerns, then is it a good idea to get another bird? The answer is a definite YES. This is because birds like to live in groups and have a partner. This makes them feel safer and less stressed. Often we are out all day and our bird is left on its own. So we generally recommend having at home at least two birds of the same species to keep each other company during the day. In the majority of bird species two males will get on well, a male and a female often will be happy together, but two females may fight. Preferably the new bird should be of a similar age to your existing bird. If your existing bird is mature, especially if the new bird is young, it may take a few weeks to months to adjust to the new bird. Be prepared in the short term to have two cages. You will need a second cage in the short term anyway to quarantine the new bird.

**So what does quarantine of a new bird mean?**

Quarantine is the separation and isolation of all new birds from all other birds.

All new birds are quarantined to prevent the introduction of new infections to the other birds already in your home or aviary.





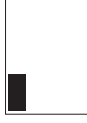











# urban animal

May 15, August 15 and November 15, 2007 and February 15, 2008

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