

# Expressing Canine Anal Glands



## Disclaimer

A series of booklets has been developed by the Clinical Skills Lab team (staff, recent graduates and students) from the School of Veterinary Sciences, University of Bristol, UK. Please note:

- Each booklet illustrates one way to perform a skill and it is acknowledged that there are often other approaches. Before using the booklets students should check with their university or college whether the approach illustrated is acceptable in their context or whether an alternative method should be used.
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Equipment for this station:

- Anal gland model (*two models on a piece of wood*)
- Non-sterile gloves
- Gauze swab (*do not use cotton wool with the model as it sticks to the surface*)

*Note: The model is based (with permission) on one developed by Susan Rose at Kansas State University, USA.*

Considerations for this station:

- **Read the steps** in this booklet **before** using the model
- **Work in pairs**
  - One person holds the model - rest it on the table surface (ensure it is held the correct way up – see arrow on model)
  - The other person will express **both** glands on one model
  - Then swap over and express the glands on the other model
- N.B. Do not use lubricant on the model.
- There is more information about performing a rectal examination on a live animal on the last page of this booklet.
- There is also a booklet for use with the canine prostate examination model: 'CSL\_D14 Canine Prostate Examination'

Anyone working in the Clinical Skills Lab must read the 'CSL\_I01 Induction' and agree to abide by the 'CSL\_I00 House Rules' & 'CSL\_I02 Lab Area Rules'

Please inform a member of staff if equipment is damaged or about to run out.



# Clinical Skills: Expressing Canine Anal Glands



## Work in pairs.

One person holds the model on the table (*as shown in the photo, arrow pointing up*).

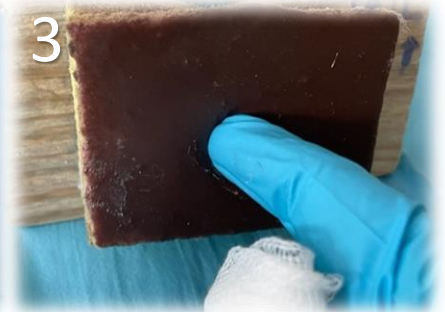
The other person uses the dominant hand for the examination and will express both glands.

N.B. With a live animal (*but not on the model*), lubricant is applied to the index finger.



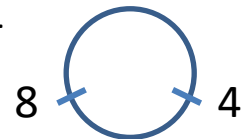
Prepare to insert the index finger into the anus while holding a gauze swab in the palm with the remaining 3 fingers (the swab will be used to collect the secretion).

N.B. With the live animal (*but not on the model*), lift the tail gently but firmly with the non-dominant hand.



Insert the index finger into the anus using a gentle and slightly twisting action.

Note: If the anus was a clock face, the anal glands are positioned at approximately 4 o'clock and 8 o'clock and just inside (deep to) the anal opening.



Palpate the **first anal gland** by gently 'pinching' or 'pressing' between the internal index finger and the externally placed thumb. Assess the size and texture of the gland. On the model it is spherical, about 1cm in diameter and soft/fluctuant to the touch.

N.B. If right handed it is easiest to start with the left gland, and vice versa.



Express the gland by gently 'milking' or squeezing the gland. Using the index finger start cranially and squeeze towards the caudal aspect of the gland – remember that the anal gland opening is positioned close to the anal orifice. Fully express the anal gland so that your index finger and thumb are almost in contact with each other.



Now express the **other anal gland**. It is preferable not to remove your index finger. Rotate the finger as shown above to locate the other gland. Alternatively, withdraw the finger and use your other hand. However, with an animal it is better to only insert the finger once and avoid causing extra discomfort i.e., empty both glands without removing your finger.



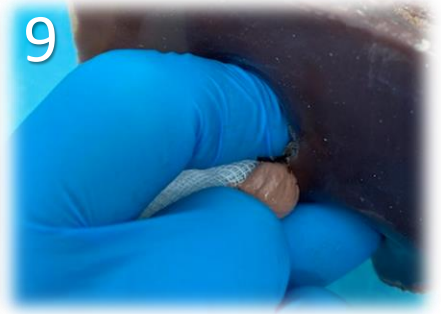
# Clinical Skills: Expressing Canine Anal Glands



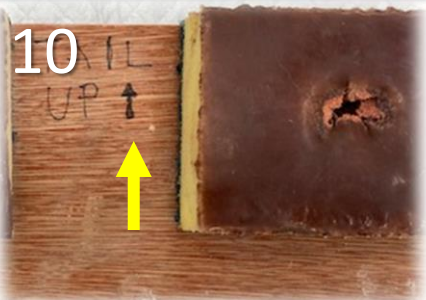
7  
As for the first gland, palpate the anal gland by gently 'pinching' or 'pressing' between the internal index finger and the externally placed thumb. Assess the size and texture of the gland. On the model, it is spherical, about 1cm in diameter and soft/fluctuant to the touch.



8  
Express the gland by gently 'milking' or squeezing the gland. Using the index finger start cranially and squeeze towards the caudal aspect of the gland – remember that the anal gland opening is positioned close to the anal orifice.



9  
Continue to press to fully express the anal gland. The index finger and thumb will be almost in contact with each other and all the secretion should be collected on the swab.



10  
When finished, **refill the anal glands** ready for the next students – see instructions on next page.

## Swap over.

The person who just expressed the glands holds the model (*as shown in the photo, arrow pointing up*).

The other person uses the dominant hand for the examination and will express both glands.

Follow Steps 2 to 9 above.



# Resetting the station: Expressing Canine Anal Glands



Reset the model by refilling the anal glands (*in situ* - do not try to remove the gland from the model). Use the pinkish-brown material in the pre-loaded syringe. The material in one syringe is the amount for one anal gland.



Locate the anal gland opening. If unsure you have found the correct opening, ask the instructor to confirm. The model's left gland opening is shown in the photo above.



Insert the tip of the syringe into the anal gland opening and inject **2ml**. Repeat with another pre-loaded syringe to refill the other gland. Place the syringes in the 'bucket' provided. **Do not throw syringes in the bin.**

If necessary, clean the surface of the model with a damp gauze swab. Put all gloves and swabs in a bin.

## *Station ready for the next person:*



Anal glands refilled and, if necessary, surface of model wiped clean.

Please inform a member of staff if equipment is damaged or about to run out.



# I wish I'd known: Expressing Canine Anal Glands

Notes about performing anal glands expression on live animals:

- Discuss with the owner the need to perform a rectal examination, especially if performing conscious or with the owner present. Advise them that the dog may react to the examination and vocalise or need restraint as it is a little uncomfortable.
- Have an assistant present to help restrain the dog. It is advisable to use a muzzle if a conscious examination is being performed.
- Visually examine the external anal structures for any abnormalities e.g. mass, ulceration, swelling, discharging sinus.
- The normal anal gland feels like a small rounded mass, just deep to the muscular anal sphincter. Its size and texture can vary according to the size of the patient, the degree of filling and the consistency of the secretion. It is often approximately 1cm in diameter and slightly soft/fluctuant to the touch.
- Before attempting to express the anal gland, position your body and face to one side of the animal. If expressing the left, stand slightly to the left. If expressing the right, stand slightly to the right. This will help you to avoid expressing any secretion onto yourself, should it get beyond the cotton wool!
- Usually, the secretion will be expressed without too much pressure especially if it is quite watery. If the secretion is gritty or the anal gland is infected, it may either be harder to express or may cause excessive discomfort if the animal is conscious.
- Veterinary professionals refer to 'anal glands' when, technically, the correct term is anal sacs.
- Both dogs and cats have anal glands, but in cats the glands are smaller and do not often cause problems.