



# Rectal Prolapse in Dogs and Cats

## Rectal & Anal Prolapse in Dogs & Cats

Anal or rectal prolapse is a condition in which one or more layers of the rectum are displaced through the anus, the opening which allows digestive waste to leave the body. It can be caused by a variety of factors, including disorders of the digestive, urinary, or genital systems. Although dogs & cats of any gender, age, or breed may be affected by this condition.

### Symptoms:

Rectal prolapse occurs when all layers of the anal/rectal tissue, along with the rectal lining, protrude through the external anal opening. The protrusion of the rectal lining through the external anal opening, is solely referred to as anal prolapse.

Dogs with rectal prolapse will demonstrate persistent straining while passing stool (or defecating). In an incomplete prolapse, a small portion of the lining of the rectum will be visible during excretion, after which it will subside. In a complete prolapse, there will be a persistent mass of tissue protruding from the anus. In the chronic stages of complete prolapse, this tissue might be black or blue in appearance.

### Causes:

A dog may develop rectal or anal prolapse if it strains while passing stool, or if it undergoes surgery to the lower digestive organs. Other contributing factors for this condition include:

- Disorders of the digestive system that cause diarrhea, straining while passing stools, presence of worms or other parasites in the digestive system, and inflammation of the small or large intestines
- Disorders of the urinary and genital systems, such as inflammation or enlargement of the prostate, inflammation of the bladder, urinary stones, and abnormal labor or birthing process
- Chronic constipation, presence of sac-like protrusions in the intestine, rectal or anal tumors, or deviation of the rectum from its usual position

## **Diagnosis:**

Veterinarian will perform a complete physical examination of your dog, including a chemical blood profile and a complete blood count. The results will usually return normal, though there may be high levels of white blood cells, similar to that seen when an infection is present. A test of stools samples may reveal the presence of parasites.

Further diagnostic procedures include X-rays or ultrasounds of the abdominal area, which may demonstrate a large prostate, foreign bodies, thickening of the bladder walls, or kidney stones.

Your Vet will also conduct a manual rectal examination to feel for displaced tissue masses. During pathological examination of the tissue (for biopsy), it may appear swollen, and will ooze red blood when incised. The tissue, if dead, appears dark purple or black and oozes bluish blood when incised.

## **Treatment**

If your dog has a concurrent bacterial or a parasitic infestation, your veterinarian will need to treat it first with an appropriate antibiotic or anti-parasitic drug. Once the underlying cause of the prolapse has been identified and treated, your veterinarian will first need to decrease the swelling and return the displaced tissue to its proper location inside the dog's anus.

This may be done manually by performing a gentle massage on the area, or by using lubricating gels or topical agents (e.g., a 50 percent dextrose solution), which aids in the reduction of the swelling. An anesthetic agent may be administered to relieve pain and discomfort. The anesthetic most commonly used is an epidural; however, your veterinarian will make his decision based upon your dog's individual needs.

Next, your veterinarian may choose to stitch the protruding tissue in its proper location to keep the tissue in place and to prevent a recurrence of a prolapse. Purse string sutures are the likeliest choice for this procedure, and the stitches will be left loose enough to allow room for excretion.

If the disorder is found to be deeper in the dog's rectal canal, the intestine may require surgical repairing.

## **After Care:**

One should watch out for recurrences of prolapsed tissue, especially if the underlying cause was not eliminated. Watch the site in which the dog had surgery for the first five to seven days, as there is a possibility of splitting and reopening, especially when the dog defecates.

After surgery, there is also a chance that your dog may lose control over its bladder and bowel, and have involuntary "accidents." Your pet may be just as disturbed as you when there is an "accident." Making sure your dog has plenty of opportunities to go outside may help avoid any accidents or related stress.