

'Why Does My Cat Scoot?'

While it's much more common to see a dog drag his backside across the floor, kitties will occasionally scoot, too. With cats, however, it's not normal behavior. Know the four reasons why a cat may scoot - all of which indicate a necessary visit to the veterinarian.

Analysis by Dr. Karen Shaw Becker

STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- It's much more common to catch your dog doing the booty scooting boogie across the carpet than your cat, but some kitties also engage in this rather unsettling behavior
- If you're a cat parent, it's important to be aware that butt scooting/dragging in kitties, especially if it happens regularly, isn't normal and requires a veterinary visit
- Causes of scooting in kitties can include itchy, irritated skin; external or GI parasites; environmental or food allergies; and anal gland issues

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Scooting, which is a polite way of describing the behavior of a furry family member dragging his or her backside across the floor, is typically associated with dogs rather than cats. And while **scooting** is indeed much more common in dogs, occasionally a kitty will also scoot. This little fellow is polite enough to use grass to do the deed, but that's not often the case:

Generally speaking, kitties feel some sort of discomfort or irritation around their backside that causes them to scoot. Some cats, long-haired kitties in particular, will occasionally scoot after leaving the litterbox to rid themselves of a bit of poop or litter stuck to their fur.

It could also be your cat has a skin condition that's itchy or painful, or she might have allergies, parasites, or a problem with her anal glands.

4 Common Reasons for Scooting in Cats

1. **Allergies** — It's possible your cat is sensitive to something in her environment that's causing her to scoot. Examples include dust mites, fleas, molds, grasses or other pollens she's exposed to outdoors or that make their way inside on shoes, clothes, or dog fur.

Depending on what you feed your cat, there's also a chance she's developed an allergy or sensitivity to something in her diet. The grains in commercial pet food are allergenic and inflammatory.

If your cat is dragging her backside around the house, the first thing you should do is eliminate all grains or

sources of starch from her diet. Stop feeding any food that contains corn, potato, oatmeal, wheat, rice or soy. Cats are obligate carnivores and shouldn't be eating these foods anyway.

I also recommend switching to a novel protein. If, for example, kitty's been eating only fish, make a transition to turkey or rabbit. A constant diet of just one or two types of protein can trigger an allergic inflammatory response.

Feeding a nutritionally optimal, species-specific diet will address food sensitivities and poor stool consistency, both of which can lead to scooting. Adding probiotics, a bit of fiber (finely ground pumpkin seeds or slippery elm powder) and digestive enzymes to her diet can also be beneficial.

2. **Parasites** — Gastrointestinal (GI) parasites are repulsive little creatures that take up residence inside your cat's digestive tract (and in some cases they're zoonoses, meaning you can get them as well), and cause all sorts of intestinal and other issues. Common invaders include giardia, coccidium, cryptosporidium, and worms (whipworms, tapeworms and hookworms).

It's very important that your veterinarian identifies the precise type of worm involved. I recommend avoiding combination treatments that claim to kill and/or prevent a variety of worms and other internal parasites. More is not better when it comes to drugs for your pet. If your cat has whipworms, for example, treat those worms specifically, and only long enough to clear the infection.

Some integrative veterinarians offer natural dewormers for certain kinds of intestinal worm infestations. I have tried them all and unfortunately, sometimes they work, and sometimes they don't.

For example, food-grade diatomaceous earth kills tapeworm segments, but not the deeply embedded head, so you may think you've killed the entire worm, only to find out later that your pet is chronically infected, which can lead to persistent GI inflammation and dysbiosis (leaky gut).

It's fine to try natural deworming first, but making sure these resilient parasites are truly eliminated, regardless of what you use, is of utmost importance to avoid chronic, avoidable GI problems and symptoms such as scooting.

3. **Anal Gland Issues** — Just like dogs, kitties have anal glands or sacs that sit just inside the rectum, one on either side of the anus at about 8:00 and 4:00. The glands secrete a very smelly, oily substance thought to be a territorial marker.

These little organs are part of nature's design, and a bowel movement of normal consistency should be sufficient to empty the contents of the sacs. However, in domesticated cats, there can be interference caused by stool that is too loose and doesn't press against the glands during evacuation. This action is necessary to trigger expression of the contents of the sacs.

Overweight cats can have anal gland problems due to insufficient muscle tone and too much fatty tissue. Certain skin disorders and infections can also affect sac emptying. If trapped secretions accumulate and thicken in the anal glands, it can lead to impaction.

The most common cause of anal gland problems is the food you feed your cat. Since the anal sacs are at the very end of the digestive tract, anything that irritates or causes inflammation of the GI tract can do the same to the anal glands.

As I explained above, the first thing you should do is eliminate all grains from the diet, including any food that contains corn, potato, oatmeal, wheat, rice or soy. I also recommend switching to a novel protein.

In addition, you'll need to address stool inconsistencies. If kitty's poop is frequently soft or watery, his anal sacs may not be getting the firm pressure they need to empty properly. Feeding a **species-specific diet** that's free of unnecessary food colorings, flavorings, additives, synthetic preservatives and artificial flavors should address both food sensitivities and poor stool consistency.

Many health concerns, including anal gland problems and scooting, disappear once a pet is eating the type and quality of food nature intended him to eat.

4. **Pruritis** — If your cat has itchy skin (pruritus), along with scooting, you may also notice him obsessively grooming his backend in an effort to relieve the itch. It's important to note that intense licking, chewing, and butt dragging can inflame the skin and lead to hair loss.

There's almost always an underlying reason for an animal's itchy bottom, including GI or external parasites (e.g., fleas or mites), allergies, bacterial and yeast infections, neoplasia (abnormal cell development), and immune disorders.

Hypersensitivity to environmental or household chemicals shouldn't be overlooked. If your cat is itchy, make sure you clean up her environment, switch to organic household cleaners, eliminate home scented products and room sprays, filter her air and water, and cover any lounging areas with an organic dust mite cover you can launder weekly.

Diagnosis of pruritus with no identified cause requires further diagnostics and treatment depends on the cause. I recommend holding off on a biopsy until other common causes have been ruled out and nontoxic treatments have been exhausted, including neuralgia and hyperesthesia.

Sources and References

[PetMD, April 27, 2017](#)
