Rectal Prolapse (Protruding Rectum) in the Dog

Drs. Foster & Smith Educational Staff

A rectal prolapse is the extrusion (pushing out) of the inner layers of the rectum through the anus. It is often a result of straining to defecate, urinate, or give birth. Diseases causing straining in the puppy, such as constipation, parasites, or diarrhea, may cause a displacement or protrusion of the rectum. Dogs straining to urinate because of urinary infections or other urinary disease may cause the rectum to prolapse. The condition may also occur in a female dog during a difficult birth. The rectum will appear as a reddened "sausage-like" protrusion from the anus. The prolapsed rectum may extend two to several inches from the body.

What are the symptoms?

A visual inspection and notation of a reddened 'sausage or doughnut-like' mass protruding from the anus provides a diagnosis of rectal prolapse.

What are the risks?

Left untreated, a dog will be unable to eliminate stool from the anus. As a result, severe illness will develop, followed within several days, by death. The extruded portion of the anus can also be abraded or injured.

What is the management?

It is of paramount importance to identify the underlying cause of a rectal prolapse. Does the dog have diarrhea or constipation, and if so, why? These problems, if present, must be corrected. Many cases of rectal prolapse can be manually replaced. Sutures may need to be placed into the anus to restrict the anal opening and prevent another prolapse. In severe instances in which the prolapsed rectal tissue become traumatized, the damaged rectal tissue may need to be surgically repaired or removed by a veterinarian.