Perineal Hernia	Perineal hernia is a condition in dogs and cats in which abdominal contents protrude through weakening of the musculature of the pelvic diaphragm into the perineal region. Pets with a perineal hernia may have a noticeable swelling on either side of the anus or both sides of the anus. Perineal hernias most commonly occur in middle aged to older non-neutered male dogs but can occur in neutered male dogs and female dogs and cats. The cause for perineal hernias is not clearly understood but male hormones appear to have an association with weakening or failure of the pelvic diaphragm. Additionally, chronic straining of the pelvic diaphragm as in cats with megacolon that have constipation has been seen as an underlying cause of perineal hernias.  Image of a non-neutered male dog with bilateral perineal hernias. Notice the large swellings on both sides of the anus. Signs and Symptoms: Perineal hernias may contain fat, rectum, omentum, small intestine, prostate, and urinary bladder. Signs that may be observed in a pet with a perineal hernia may include: • Constipation • Straining or difficulty deficating • Straining or difficulty urinating • Urinary incontinence • Altered tail carriage • Lethargy • Anorexia • Abdominal pain

Diagnosis: To diagnose a perineal hernia the veterinarian will do a physical examination and a rectal examination. A rectal examination will be helpful to determine the content of the perineal hernia, if it is unilateral (one side) or bilateral (both sides), if there is a mass, and if prostatic disease may be present in male dogs. Sedation for rectal palpation may be necessary in some patients. Diagnostics tests that may be performed include:

- Complete blood count, blood chemistry profile, and urinalysis to evaluate the pet's health.
- Radiographs of the abdomen and thorax.
- Abdominal ultrasound

Pets with abdominal pain and entrapment of intestine or bladder need emergency treatment.

Radiograph of a dog with a large stool filled perineal hernia. Notice the upward displacement of the tail by the perineal hernia.

Treatment: Pets with non-emergent perineal hernias may be treated medically or surgically. Medical therapy is often unsuccessful at long-term management of perineal hernias. Medical treatment may consist of a combination of stool softeners, diet, enemas, and fluid therapy. Surgical treatment targets reconstructing the pelvic diaphragm and neutering of male dogs to remove hormonal influences involved with weakening the pelvic musculature and prostatic disease. Surgery involves creating an internal obturator muscle flap to transpose into the weakened area and suturing it in place with the regional muscle. In severe cases, surgical mesh material may be necessary to repair the defect.

	Postoperative care: The pet will be discharged with an antibiotic, pain medication, stool softeners, and possibly a specific low residue diet or high fiber diet. An Elizabethan collar is worn to prevent licking and irritation to the surgical site that could lead to infection or surgical incision site dehiscence (opening). Reduced activity for approximately 4-6 weeks after surgery while the surgical site is healing. The prognosis is good for the majority of cases; however, in 10-15% of the cases, recurrence of the hernia may occur within a year. Prevention of over activity and self-trauma may help lower this recurrence rate. There is no proven means to prevent perineal hernias from forming. The problem is rarely seen in castrated male dogs so early castration in dogs not intended for breeding purposes is recommended. Prognosis: Over-all the prognosis for surgical treatment of perineal hernias is good. Approximately 10-15% of cases will have a recurrence of the perineal hernia.