

# The Quran and its Message

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سَلَامٌ عَلَيْكُمْ

Salamun Alaikum (Peace be upon you)

## DOES THE QURAN ALLOW THE EATING OF LIONS, DOGS, CATS, RATS ETC?

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Some Muslims assert that from a Quran's perspective and out of the category of animals specifically, only swine flesh (pig's meat) has been made forbidden and thus all other animals such as cats, dogs, lions, gorilla's, elephants, rats etc are lawful (Arabic: halal) for consumption.

The maxim being, what is not expressly forbidden is allowable for food from a Quran's perspective.

Others make use of the seeming 'lack of prohibition' as evidence that the Quran is incomplete without the support of [Islamic secondary sources](#) where such prohibitions are elaborated.

Those Muslims who would prefer not to make use of [Islamic secondary sources](#) such as Ahadith to support their arguments attempt to explain away these '**perceived**' dietary inconsistencies by way of explaining it through the lens of 'Sunnah' in a restricted capacity. However, from the Quran's perspective they still unfortunately fall shy of a coherent argument.

Some others concede that such animals are allowable for food and the only reason that one (generally) does not consume rats, dogs cats etc are because of cultural norms or tastes and not because of scriptural prohibitions.

The above assertions have no warrant from a Quran's perspective that **only makes permissible** those animals which are from the category of '**grazing livestock**' with notable exceptions. As the relevant verses are never quoted, the context of the prohibition of **swine** flesh is seldom appreciated.

This we shall note below, God willing.

## ONLY GRAZING LIVESTOCK IS LAWFUL

It is quite interesting to note that before the unlawfulness of **swine** is mentioned in verse 5:3, **verse 5:1** unequivocally and explicitly informs the reader of what is lawful.

005:001

"O ye who believe! Fulfil your obligations. **Grazing livestock (Arabic: bahimatu l'anaami) is made lawful (Arabic: uhillat) to you (for food) except that which is announced to you (herein), game being unlawful when ye are on the pilgrimage. Lo! God ordains that which pleases Him"**

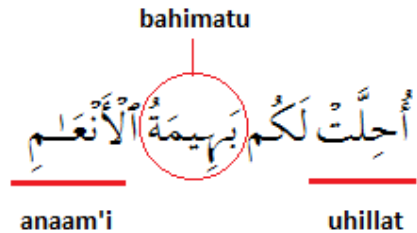


Illustration - Joseph Islam

Only then are the exceptions elaborated two verses later (as in what is **unlawful**) in verse 5:3 which includes the mention of swine flesh.

005:003

"**Forbidden to you (for food) are: dead meat, blood, the flesh of swine, and ..."**

## UNDERSTANDING THE MEANING OF 'BAHIMATU L-ANAAM' (Grazing Livestock)

### 'BAHIMA'

**Root: Ba-Ha-Miim** = animals that pasture/graze, lamb/goat/sheep, animals of the bovine kind, beasts/brutes.

It has always been clearly understood by the classical usage of the Arabic word '**Bahima**' that beasts of pasture or grazing animals are implied. It is also interesting to note that pigs also pasture.

Therefore it is only reasonable to deduce that by virtue of the swine flesh being mentioned as an exception, it is within the category of '**Bahima**' (i.e. animals that pasture / grazing animals or beasts) that the **exception** is intended and **not** the animal kingdom as a whole.

'ANAAM' (Cattle / Pasturing livestock)

Root: Nun-Ayn-Miim

*نَقَرَ* *Pasturing* مَال [or cattle]; mostly applied to camels, and neat, and sheep and goats: or applied to all these, and to camels when alone,

Source: Edward Lanes Lexicon [1]

*بِهِم* To wean lambs, or kids; the first form is wanting.  
*بِهِمَةَ* An animal; *بِهِمَةُ الْأَنْعَامِ* Brute beasts,  
cattle: the logical root is *بِهِم* *Lambs or kids.*

Source: A Dictionary and Glossary of the Koran - John Penrice 1873 [2]

*أَنْعَامٌ* Cattle.

Source: A Dictionary and Glossary of the Koran - John Penrice 1873 [3]

Therefore, the term 'Bahimatu l-anaam' refers to grazing livestock / cattle. These are not predators but herbivores.

**THERE ARE SOME GRAZING ANIMALS WHICH ARE SPECIFICALLY MENTIONED FOR TRAVEL AND NOT FOR FOOD**

006.142

"Of the cattle (Arabic: Anaam) are some for burden and some for meat: eat what God has provided for you, and follow not the footsteps of Satan: for he is to you an avowed enemy"

016.008

"And (He has created) horses, mules, and donkeys, for you to ride (Arabic: Litarkabuha) and use for show (Arabic: Wazinatan); and He has created (other) things of which ye have no knowledge"

Note that the animals above have been mentioned for travel and show and **not** as food. It is also interesting to note that the **camel** is absent from this list (therefore can be eaten).

### MISINTERPRETING VERSE 6:145

Some Muslims assert that verse 6:145 allows for the consumption of all animals **including those** outside the category of **grazing livestock**. As we will note, such an assertion has no warrant from the Quran.

#### 006.145

"Say: I do not find in what has been revealed to me anything forbidden to an eater to eat of except that it be what has died of itself, or blood poured forth, or flesh of swine - for indeed, that surely is impure - or that which is a transgression, is dedicated to other than God. But whoever is driven to necessity, not desiring nor transgressing the limit, then surely your Lord is Forgiving, Merciful."

The above verse clearly rebukes those that invent prohibitions without warrant.

Keeping the verse in context, one notes that verse 6:145 is a clear response to the unwarranted claims in the previous verses (6:143-44) where some have forbidden certain animals from **within the category of grazing livestock (bahimatul-anaam)**.

#### 006:143

"(Take) eight (head of cattle) in (four) pairs: **of sheep a pair, and of goats a pair**; say, has He forbidden the two males, or the two females, or (the young) which the wombs of the two females enclose? Tell me with knowledge if ye are truthful:

#### 006.144

"**Of camels a pair, and oxen a pair**; say, has He forbidden the two males, or the two females, or (the young) which the wombs of the two females enclose? - Were ye present when God ordered you such a thing? **But who does more wrong than one who invents a lie against God**, to lead astray men without knowledge? For God guides not people who do wrong.

Verses (6:143-44) remain connected with verse 6:145 which mention such animals as sheep (da'n), goats (ma'z), camels (ibil), cow, kine, ox (baqarah) etc.

It is with a view to counter these unwarranted, self imposed restrictions **within** the category of **'grazing livestock'** that verse 6:145 responds.

Verse 6:145 is **not** to be understood as a response addressing the exception from **'all animals'**. In this way, verse 6:145 only serves to corroborate the instructions found in other verses such as 5:1-4.

### SCRIPTURAL TRADITIONS OF THE PEOPLE OF THE BOOK

Any astute student of the Quran will be familiar with its primary addressees. One only needs to consult Chapter 2 (Surah Baqarah) of the Quran to realise that a wide contingent of the addressees also included those from the People of the Book. (e.g. Jews and Christians).

Given the following verse, an overlap of the food categories has to be assumed between believers and those believing souls from the People of the Book.

005:005

"...and the food of those who were given the Book is lawful for you, and your food is lawful for them..."

It would be a difficult proposition to accept that the Quran intended to make lawful animals such as lions, rodents (Leviticus 11:29) and dogs (Leviticus 11:27) which were never permissible to those of previous followers of revelation by the absence of any explicit verse of the Quran.

Even though the Quran acknowledges that some dietary restrictions were imposed on the People of the Book (6:146; 16:118), they all remain from the category of grazing livestock (6:146). For the Quran to allow the consumption of other animals especially not in the scriptural tradition of previous monotheistic followers, one would arguably expect an **unequivocal explicit** verse, not **implicit, ambiguous** deductions.

### WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN CREATURES (Arabic: Anaam) and CATTLE (Arabic: Anaam)?

055:010

"It is He Who has spread out the earth for (His) creatures (Arabic: Anaam)"

وَالْأَرْضَ وَضَعَهَا لِلْأَنْعَامِ

Anaam

Illustration - Joseph Islam

005:001

"O ye who believe! Fulfil your obligations. **Grazing livestock (Arabic: anaam(i))** is made lawful to you (for food) except that which is announced to you (herein), game being unlawful when ye are on the pilgrimage. Lo! God ordains that which pleases Him"

أُحِلَّتْ لَكُمْ بَهِيمَةُ الْأَنْعَامِ

Anaam

Illustration - Joseph Islam

Please note that there is a subtle but **crucial difference** between the 'Anaam' as used in **5.1** (which is lawful to eat) and the 'Anaam' used in **55:10** (all living creatures - not necessarily lawful). Those familiar with the Arabic script will be able to recognise the subtle difference immediately. The 'Anaam' in **5.1** is written with an 'AYN' and the 'Anaam' in **55.10** is written with an 'Alif' only.

الأنعام

005.001

للأنعام

055:010

Therefore there are two different roots attached to each of the words.

The root Arabic word for 'Anaam' in verse **5.1** is **NUN-AYN-MIM** which means cattle / livestock (Which is lawful to eat)

The root Arabic word for 'Anaam' in verse **55.10** is **ALIF-NUN-MIM** which means all creatures which include mankind, jinn, animals and all other creatures on the face of the earth that are 'al khalaq' (created) or indeed, everything that has a soul or a spirit (which of course is not necessarily lawful to eat)

A change of just one letter can make the crucial difference between understanding a word as 'livestock' to understanding it as 'all living creatures'. This is also why one can appreciate how important it is for the Arabic listener to be able to distinguish between the sound of the 'AYN' (from the throat) and the ALIF and distinguish between the two.

One can also appreciate how **both** the written and oral transmission of the Quran **in tandem** would have contributed to its preservation from the very point of revelation.

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#### Related Article:

(1) [Food Permissibility and Prohibitions](#)

#### REFERENCES

[1] LANE. E.W, Edward Lanes Lexicon, Williams and Norgate 1863; Librairie du Liban Beirut-Lebanon 1968, Volume 8, Page 3035

[2] PENRICE, J, A Dictionary and Glossary of the Koran 1873; Reprint 1991 Adam Publishers & Distributors, Delhi, Page 20 Highlights marked in red on the lexicon excerpt are my own insertions. They have no bearing on the original text other than they emphasise relevance to the topic at hand. These are merely illustrations and have solely been utilised for educational and explanatory purposes.

[3] Ibid., Page 149

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