

Which Animals Does the Bible Designate as 'Clean' and 'Unclean'?

God reveals which animals-including fish and birds-are suitable and unsuitable for human consumption in Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14. Although the lists aren't exhaustive, He reveals guidelines for recognizing animals that are acceptable for food.

God states that cud-chewing animals with split hooves can be eaten ([Leviticus 11:3](#); [Deuteronomy 14:6](#)). These specifically include the cattle, sheep, goat, deer and gazelle families ([Deuteronomy 14:4-5](#)). He also lists such animals as camels, rabbits and pigs as being unclean, or unfit to eat ([Leviticus 11:4-8](#)). He later lists such "creeping things" as moles, mice and lizards as unfit to eat (verses 29-31), as well as four-footed animals with paws (cats, dogs, bears, lions, tigers, etc.) as unclean (verse 27).

He tells us that salt- and freshwater fish with fins and scales may be eaten (verses 9-12), but water creatures without those characteristics (catfish, lobsters, oysters, shrimp, crabs, clams, mussels, squid, frogs, octopi, etc.) should not be eaten.

God also lists birds and other flying creatures that are unclean for consumption (verses 13-19). He identifies carrion eaters and birds of prey as unclean, plus ostriches, storks, herons and bats.

Birds such as chickens, turkeys and pheasants are not on the unclean list and therefore can be eaten. Insects, with the exception of locusts, crickets and grasshoppers, are listed as unclean (verses 20-23).

Why does God identify some animals as suitable for human consumption and others as unsuitable? God didn't give laws to arbitrarily assert control over humans. He gave His laws (including those of which meats are clean or unclean) "that it might be well" with those who seek to obey Him ([Deuteronomy 5:29](#)).

Although God did not reveal the specific reasons some animals may be eaten and others must be avoided, we can make generalized conclusions based on the animals included in the two categories.

In listing the animals that should not be eaten, God forbids the consumption of scavengers and carrion eaters, which devour other animals for their food.

Animals such as pigs, bears, vultures and raptors can eat (and thrive) on decaying flesh. Predatory animals such as wolves, lions, leopards and cheetahs most often prey on the weakest (and at times the diseased) in animal herds.

When it comes to sea creatures, bottom dwellers such as lobsters and crabs scavenge for dead animals on the sea floor. Shellfish such as oysters, clams and mussels similarly consume decaying organic matter that sinks to the sea floor, including sewage.

A common denominator of many of the animals God designates as unclean is that they routinely eat flesh that would sicken or kill humans. When we eat such animals we partake of a food chain that includes things harmful to humans.

As nutritionist David Meinz observes: "Could it be that God, in His wisdom, created certain creatures whose sole purpose is to clean up after the others? Their entire 'calling' may be to act exclusively as the sanitation workers of our ecology. God may simply be telling us that it's better for us believers not to consume the meat of these trash collectors" (*Eating by the Book*, 1999, p. 225).

The following list, based on Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14, identifies many of the animals God designates as clean and unclean. The list uses their common names.

Clean Animals			
Animals That Chew the Cud and Part the Hoof	Fish With Fins and Scales		Birds With Clean Characteristics
Antelope	Anchovy	Minnow	
Bison (buffalo)	Barracuda	Mullet	
Caribou	Bass	Perch (or bream)	
Cattle (beef, veal)	Black pomfret (or monchong)	Pike (or pickerel or jack)	Chicken
Deer (venison)	Bluefish	Pollack (or pollock or Boston bluefish)	Dove
Elk	Bluegill	Rockfish	Duck
Gazelle	Carp	Salmon	Goose
Giraffe	Cod	Sardine (or pilchard)	Grouse
Goat	Crappie	Shad	Guinea fowl
Hart	Drum	Silver hake (or whiting)	Partridge
Ibex	Flounder	Smelt (or frost fish or ice fish)	Peafowl
Moose	Grouper	Snapper (or ebu, jobfish, lehi, onaga, opakapaka or uku)	Pheasant
Ox	Grunt	Sole	Pigeon
Reindeer	Haddock	Steelhead	Prairie chicken
Sheep (lamb, mutton)	Hake	Sucker	Ptarmigan
	Halibut	Sunfish	Quail
	Hardhead	Tarpon	Sagehen
	Herring (or alewife)	Trout (or weakfish)	Sparrow (and other songbirds)
	Kingfish	Tuna (or ahi, aku, albacore, bonito or tombo)	Swan*
	Mackerel	Whitefish	Teal
	Mahimahi (or dorado, dolphinfish[not to be confused with the mammal dolphin])		Turkey
			Insects
			Types of locusts that may include crickets and grasshoppers

* In the King James Version, [Leviticus 11:18](#) and [Deuteronomy 14:16](#) list "swan" among unclean birds. However, this seems to be a mistranslation. The original word apparently refers to a kind of owl and is so translated in most modern Bible versions.

Unclean Animals

Animals With Unclean Characteristics	Groundhog	Shellfish	Grebe
	Hare		Grosbeak
	Hippopotamus	Abalone	Gull
Swine	Kangaroo	Clam	Hawk
	Llama (alpaca, vicuña)	Crab	Heron
Boar	Mole	Crayfish	Kite
Peccary	Monkey	Lobster	Lapwing
Pig (hog, bacon, ham, lard, pork, most sausage and pepperoni)	Mouse	Mussel	Loon
	Muskrat	Prawn	Magpie
	Opossum	Oyster	Osprey
	Porcupine	Scallop	Ostrich
Canines	Rabbit	Shrimp	Owl
	Raccoon		Parrot
Coyote	Rat	Soft body	Pelican
Dog	Rhinoceros		Penguin
Fox	Skunk	Cuttlefish	Plover
Hyena	Slug	Jellyfish	Rail
Jackal	Snail (escargot)	Limpet	Raven
Wolf	Squirrel	Octopus	Roadrunner
	Wallaby	Squid (calamari)	Sandpiper
Felines	Weasel		Seagull
	Wolverine	Sea mammals	Stork
Cat	Worm		Swallow
Cheetah	All insects except some	Dolphin	Swift
Leopard	in the locust	Otter	Vulture
Lion	family	Porpoise	Water hen
Panther		Seal	Woodpecker
Tiger	Marine Animals Without Scales and Fins	Walrus	
		Whale	Reptiles
Equines	Fish	Birds of Prey, Scavengers and Others	Alligator
			Caiman
Ass	Bullhead		Crocodile
Donkey	Catfish	Albatross	Lizard
Horse	Eel	Bat	Snake
Mule	European Turbot	Bittern	Turtle
Onager	Marlin	Buzzard	
Zebra (quagga)	Paddlefish	Condor	Amphibians
Other	Sculpin	Coot	

Armadillo	Shark	Cormorant	Blindworm
Badger	Stickleback	Crane	Frog
Bear	Squid	Crow	Newt
Beaver	Sturgeon (includes most caviar)	Cuckoo	Salamander
Camel	Swordfish	Eagle	Toad
Elephant		Flamingo	
Gorilla			