

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

Antelope
 Bison (buffalo)
 Caribou
 Cattle (beef, veal)
 Deer (venison)
 Elk
 Gazelle
 Giraffe
 Goat
 Hart
 Ibex
 Moose
 Ox
 Reindeer
 Sheep (lamb, mutton)

Fish With Fins and Scales

Anchovy
 Barracuda
 Bass
 Black pomfret (or monchong)
 Bluefish
 Bluegill
 Carp
 Cod
 Crappie
 Drum
 Flounder
 Grouper
 Grunt
 Haddock
 Hake
 Halibut
 Hardhead
 Herring (or alewife)
 Kingfish
 Mackerel
 Mahimahi (or dorado, dolphinfish[not to be confused with the mammal dolphin])

Minnow
 Mullet
 Perch (or bream)
 Pike (or pickerel or jack)
 Pollack (or pollock or Boston bluefish)
 Rockfish
 Salmon
 Sardine (or pilchard)
 Shad
 Silver hake (or whiting)
 Smelt (or frost fish or ice fish)
 Snapper (or ebu, jobfish, lehi, onaga, opakapaka or uku)
 Sole
 Steelhead
 Sucker
 Sunfish
 Tarpon
 Trout (or weakfish)
 Tuna (or ahi, aku, albacore, bonito or tombo)
 Whitefish

Birds With Clean Characteristics

Chicken
 Dove
 Duck
 Goose
 Grouse
 Guinea fowl
 Partridge
 Peafowl
 Pheasant
 Pigeon
 Prairie chicken
 Ptarmigan
 Quail
 Sagehen
 Sparrow (and other songbirds)
 Swan*
 Teal
 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

Swine

Boar
Peccary
Pig (hog, bacon, ham, lard, pork, most sausage and pepperoni)

Canines

Coyote
Dog
Fox
Hyena
Jackal
Wolf

Felines

Cat
Cheetah
Leopard
Lion
Panther
Tiger

Equines

Ass
Donkey
Horse
Mule
Onager
Zebra (quagga)

Other

Armadillo
Badger
Bear
Beaver
Camel
Elephant
Gorilla

Groundhog
Hare
Hippopotamus
Kangaroo
Llama (alpaca, vicuña)
Mole
Monkey
Mouse
Muskrat
Opossum
Porcupine
Rabbit
Raccoon
Rat
Rhinoceros
Skunk
Slug
Snail (escargot)
Squirrel
Wallaby
Weasel
Wolverine
Worm

All insects except some in the locust family

Marine Animals Without Scales and Fins

Fish

Bullhead
Catfish
Eel
European Turbot
Marlin
Paddlefish
Sculpin
Shark
Stickleback
Squid
Sturgeon (includes most caviar)
Swordfish

Shellfish

Abalone
Clam
Crab
Crayfish
Lobster
Mussel
Prawn
Oyster
Scallop
Shrimp

Soft body

Cuttlefish
Jellyfish
Limpet
Octopus
Squid (calamari)

Sea mammals

Dolphin
Otter
Porpoise
Seal
Walrus
Whale

Birds of Prey, Scavengers and Others

Albatross
Bat
Bittern
Buzzard
Condor
Coot
Cormorant
Crane
Crow
Cuckoo
Eagle
Flamingo

Grebe
Grosbeak
Gull
Hawk
Heron
Kite
Lapwing
Loon
Magpie
Osprey
Ostrich
Owl
Parrot
Pelican
Penguin
Plover
Rail
Raven
Roadrunner
Sandpiper
Seagull
Stork
Swallow
Swift
Vulture
Water hen
Woodpecker

Reptiles

Alligator
Caiman
Crocodile
Lizard
Snake
Turtle

Amphibians

Blindworm
Frog
Newt
Salamander
Toad

