

221754 - Pure and Impure Animals in Islam

the question

What are the pure (tahir) and impure (najis) animals?

Detailed answer

It is well known that the established principle in Islamic teachings is that things and creatures are pure (tahir), and nothing can be deemed impure (najis) unless there is Shar`i evidence to indicate that it is impure.

Animals are of different types and kinds, and the scholars differed regarding the rulings on them as to which are pure and which are impure. We may sum up their discussion on that as follows:

- **Any animal whose meat is permissible to eat is pure, according to scholarly consensus.**

Ibn Hazm said:

“Regarding every animal whose meat is permissible to eat, there is no difference of scholarly opinion regarding the fact that it is pure. Allah, may He be exalted, says:

{[the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him)] makes lawful for them the good things and prohibits for them the evil } [Al-A'raf 7:157]

Everything that is halal (permissible) is tayyib (good), and that which is good cannot be impure; rather it is pure.” (*Al-Muhalla*, 1/129)

Ibn al-Mundhir said:

“All of the scholars are unanimously agreed, with no difference between them, that the leftover water of an animal whose meat is permissible to eat is tahir and it is permissible to drink it or purify oneself with it.” (*Al-Awsat*, 1/299)

- **Any animal that does not have a circulatory system is pure, such as flies, locusts, ants, bees, scorpions, cockroaches, beetles and spiders.**

The circulatory system refers to the [blood](#) . All of these insects [and arachnids] do not have blood or a circulatory system.

The fact that they are pure is indicated by the words of the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him): “If a fly falls in the vessel of one of you, let him submerge it entirely, then take it out and throw it away, for on one of its wings is healing and on the other is a disease.” (Narrated by Al-Bukhari, 5782)

If it were impure, he would not have instructed us to submerge it in the vessel.

Ibn Al-Qayyim said:

“This is a very clear indication that if a fly dies in water or some other liquid, it does not make it impure. This is the view of the majority of scholars, and no difference of opinion is known among the early generations concerning that.

The evidence for that is that the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) enjoined submerging it in the food, and it is known that the fly will die as a result of that, especially if the food is hot. If it were the case that it would make the food impure, then this would be an instruction to spoil the food, but the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) was to rectify the situation.

Moreover, this ruling also includes anything that does not have a circulatory system, such as bees, wasps, spiders and the like.” (*Zad Al-Ma’ad* 4/101)

- **Animals that mingle with people and it is difficult to avoid them are pure, even if their meat is not permissible to eat or they are predators.**

That includes [cats](#) , [donkeys](#) , mules, [mice](#) , and other animals that reside in houses.

This is indicated by the hadith of Kabshah bint Ka`b ibn Malik, who was married to a son of Abu Qatadah, and narrated that Abu Qatadah came in.

She said: I brought water for him to do wudu', and a cat came to drink from it, so he tipped the vessel for it to drink.

Kabshah said: "He saw me looking at him and said, Do you find it strange, O daughter of my brother?"

I said, Yes.

He said, The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said, "They (cats) are not impure, rather they are among those who go around amongst you."

(Narrated by the four authors of *As-Sunan*. Classed as sahih by Al-Bukhari, At-Tirmidhi, Al-'Uqayli and Ad-Daraqutni)

What is meant by "those who go around amongst us" is those who come in and mingle with us." (*At-Tamhid* 1/319)

The phrase translated as "those who go around" appears in both masculine and feminine forms in the original Arabic. The masculine form *tawwafun* refers to the children of Adam (humans) who frequently enter one another's houses and so on, and the feminine form *tawwafat* refers to livestock that often live in proximity to people, such as sheep, cattle and camels. The Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) regarded cats as belonging to both of these two types, because they often go around and mingle with people. The intensive form of the Arabic words indicates that this happens a great deal and frequently." (*Sharh Abi Dawud* by Al-'Ayni, 1/220)

This indicates that the reason for the ruling that cats are not impure is the hardship that would be involved in avoiding them, because they frequent houses and enter them, to such an extent that it is difficult to protect vessels from them. The meaning is that they go around among you in your homes and dwellings, so they pass you and rub themselves against you and you pet them, and if they were impure, I would have instructed you to avoid them." (*'Awn Al-Ma'bud*, 1/141)

Ibn Al-Qayyim said:

“What has been mentioned in Islamic teachings concerning that is of the utmost wisdom and purpose, for if Islam said that they were impure, that would have caused a great deal of trouble and hardship for the ummah, because they go around among people a great deal, by night and by day, and come into contact with their furniture, clothes and food.” (*I`lam Al-Muwaqqi'in* 2/172)

The view that cats are pure is the view of the jurists of all regions, the scholars of Madinah, Kufah, Sham (Syria) and all the scholars of the Hijaz and 'Iraq, and the scholars of hadith.” (*Al-Awsat* by *Ibn Al-Mundhir* 1/276)

So if a cat drinks from a vessel or eats from one's food, it does not become impure.

An analogy is drawn between cats and other animals that frequently inhabit houses.

So any animal that frequently goes around among people and is difficult to avoid comes under the same ruling as cats. But an exception is made from that regarding the animal which the Lawgiver excepted from that, namely dogs. They often go around among people, yet despite that they are impure.

Shaykh Ibn 'Uthaymin said:

“The apparent meaning of the hadith indicates that they [cats] are regarded as pure because it is difficult to avoid them, because they are among the animals that go around among us, and they frequently mingle with us, so if they were to be deemed impure, that would cause difficulty for people.

Thus we learn that the reason for the ruling is the kind of going around and mingling that makes it difficult to avoid them. So everything that is difficult to avoid is deemed to be pure.

Based on that, mules and donkeys are pure, and this is the more correct view which was favoured by many of the scholars. (*Ash-Sharh Al-Mumti'* 1/444)

The correct scholarly view is that donkeys and mules come under the same category as cats with regard to their leftover water and sweat being pure. This is the view of the Malikis and Shafi`is, for the reason mentioned, and because people need them to ride and carry goods.

Ibn Qudamah said:

“The correct view in my opinion is that mules and donkeys are pure, because the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) used to ride them, and they were ridden during his time and during the era of the Companions. If they were impure, the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) would have pointed that out. And because they cannot be avoided by those who keep them, they are similar to cats in this regard.” (*Al-Mughni* 1/68)

Shaykh ‘Abd Ar-Rahman as-Sa’di said:

“The correct view concerning which there can be no doubt is that mules and donkeys are pure when they are alive, like cats. So their saliva and sweat are pure. That is because the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) used to ride them a great deal, and they were ridden during his time. The Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said regarding cats: “They are among those who go about among you.” So he gave the reason as being because they go about a great deal among people and it is difficult to avoid them, and it is well known that the difficulty [of avoiding donkeys and mules] is greater than that.” (*Al-Mukhtarat Al-Jaliyyah* p. 27)

- **Dogs and pigs are impure**

The fact that [pigs are impure](#) is indicated by the verse in which Allah, may He be exalted, says (interpretation of the meaning):

{Say, “I do not find within that which was revealed to me [anything] forbidden to one who would eat it unless it be a dead animal or blood spilled out or the flesh of swine – for indeed, it is impure.”} [Al-An‘am 6:145]

The view that pigs are impure is the view of the majority of scholars among the earlier and later generations.

Ibn Hazm said: "The scholars are unanimously agreed that the flesh, fat, cartilage, brains and sinews are all haram, and all of that is impure." (*Maratib Al-Ijma'* p. 23)

An-Nawawi said: "Ibn Al-Mundhir narrated that the scholars were unanimously agreed that pigs are impure, and this is the strongest evidence, if that consensus is proven. But the view of Malik is that pigs are pure so long as they are alive." (*Al-Majmu'* 2/568)

As for the [impurity of dogs](#) , that is indicated by the words of the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him): "The purification of the vessel of one of you, if a dog licks it, is to wash it seven times, the first time with dust." (Narrated by Muslim 9279)

Al-Khattabi said:

"From this hadith we may understand that dogs are impure in and of themselves, and were it not for the fact that they are impure, the Prophet's instruction to purify a vessel that has been licked by a dog would not have any meaning. Purification is basically done either to remove ritual impurity (hadath) or to remove physical impurity (najasah). Vessels cannot come under the ruling on ritual impurity, hence it is known that the aim of this purification is to remove physical impurity.

Once it is proven that the dog's tongue with which it laps up water is impure and that the vessel must be purified from that, then we may understand from that that all the other parts of the dog come under the same ruling as its tongue in terms of impurity. So no matter whatever part of its body touched something, it is obligatory to purify it." (*Ma'alim As-Sunan* 1/39)

Some of the scholars are of the view that the hadith indicates that only the saliva and mouth of the dog are impure; as for the rest of the dog's body, it is to be regarded as pure, based on the principle that everything is pure unless there is evidence to the contrary. This

is the view of the Hanafis, and it is the view which was favoured by Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyah. (See: *Majmu' Al-Fatawa*, 21/530)

Ibn Daqiq Al-'Eid (may Allah have mercy on him) stated that the ruling that the entire body of the dog is impure is an opinion (ijtihad) of the scholars, and it is not a text narrated from the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him). Hence he said: Thus it is clear that the hadith only indicates that the impurity has to do with the dog's mouth, and the idea that the rest of the dog's body is impure was developed by way of analogy." (*Ihkam Al-Ahkam* p. 24)

The view that the entire dog is impure is the view of the Shafi`is and Hanbalis.

Ibn Qudamah said: "Dogs and pigs are impure, including all parts of their bodies and their waste (urine and feces), and anything that falls from them [such as hair and sweat.]" (*Al-Mughni*, 2/67)

This is also the view favoured by the Permanent Committee for Ifta'. It says in *Fatawa Al-Lajnah* (23/89): "The entire dog is impure, its saliva and everything else."

- **With regard to all other animals which are not included in the categories mentioned above - whether they are predators such as lions, tigers , leopards and wolves, or they are birds of prey, such as falcons, eagles , hawks and the like, or they are animals whose meat is not eaten, even though they are not predators, such as elephants and monkeys - this is a matter concerning which the scholars disagreed.**

1. The view of the Malikis is that all animals are pure when they are alive, with no exceptions from that
2. The view of the Hanafis is that all animals are pure except pigs.
3. The view of the Shafa'is is that all animals are pure except dogs and pigs.
4. The view of the Hanbalis is that dogs and pigs, and predators, both animals and birds, are impure, and all others are pure.

A number of hadiths have been quoted as evidence to prove that the animals mentioned above are pure or impure, but they are either da'if (weak) or not valid to quote as evidence.

The strongest evidence that may be quoted for their being pure is adherence to the basic principle, and analogy with cats.

Ibn 'Abd Al-Barr said: Because it is proven in the hadith texts that cats, which are predators who hunt other animals and eat dead meat, are not impure, this indicates that there is no impurity in any living creature." (*At-Tamheed* 1/336)

The strongest evidence that may be quoted for their being impure is the following:

1. The Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) ruled that cats are pure, even though they are predators, and he gave as the reason for that the fact that they are among those who go around among us.

From this it may be understood that other predators who do not go around among us are impure, otherwise cats and other predators would come under the same ruling, and this reason would have no meaning.

2. The hadith of 'Abdullah ibn 'Umar, who said: I heard the Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) being asked about water in the wilderness, and the predators and animals that come to drink from it. He said: "If the water is equivalent to two qullahs, then it cannot become impure."

Were it not for the fact that the predators' drinking from it makes it impure, there would be no purpose in them asking about it or in his giving them this answer.

Ibn At-Turkmani said: The apparent meaning of this hadith indicates that the leftover water of predators is impure, because were it not for that, this condition would be pointless, and the limitation would make no sense." (*Al-Jawhar An-Naqi* 1/250)

An-Nawawi said: This hadith was quoted as evidence by those who say that the leftover water of predators is impure, because it mentions "and the predators and animals that

come to drink from it". But that does not count as evidence, because when predators come to a pool of water left by the rain, they usually wade into the water and urinate in it, in addition to the fact that their feet and the like are not usually free of impurity. So their question was about that, and the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) told them of a general principle: if water reaches the amount of two qullahs, it does not become impure because of impurity falling into it, and water in the wilderness and in pools left by the rain is usually no less than two qullahs." (*Al-Ijaz fi Sharh Sunan Abi Dawud* p. 287)

'Ubaydullah Al-Mubarakfuri said something similar: The hadith of the two qullahs does not indicate that the leftover water of predators is impure, as these people think, because the reason for the question was the fact that usually, when predators come to the water, they wade into it and urinate, and their bodies may not be free of the contamination of their urine and stools." (*Mir'at Al-Mafatih* 2/185)

The view that it is pure is the view that was favoured by the scholars of the Permanent Committee for Ifta', who said: The more correct view is that they are pure... Predators such as wolves, tigers and lions, and birds of prey such as falcons and kites... This is what is in accordance with the shar'i evidence." (*Fatawa Al-Lajnah Ad-Da'imah* 5/380), under the supervision of Shaykh Ibn Baz.

Similarly, Shaykh Ibn 'Uthaymin regarded this view as more correct, as he said: The correct view is that they are pure, because if we say that they are impure, that will cause hardship for people, because there are pools of water left by the rain in the wilderness that are less than two qullahs, and undoubtedly predators and birds come to this water. So if we say that they are impure, this will cause hardship for people, but what appears to us to be the case is that the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) came to such water and did wudu' using it." (*At-Ta'liqat 'ala Al-Kafi* 1/41)

We may conclude from all of the above that all animals while alive are pure, whether they are those whose meat is permissible to eat or predators or insects or anything else, and no exception is made from that except dogs and pigs, which are impure.

And Allah knows best.