

## Conference Paper

# Animal Welfare from Islamic Perspective

L Safitri<sup>1\*</sup>, A N Syamsi<sup>1</sup>, H Purwaningsih<sup>1</sup>, K Muatip, A Fadloli<sup>2</sup>, D Ariyani<sup>3</sup>, I K Rahman<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Faculty of Animal Science, Jenderal Soedirman University, Purwokerto, Indonesia

<sup>2</sup>Graduate School, Center for Religious and Cross-Cultural Studies, Gadjah Mada University, Yogyakarta, Indonesia

<sup>3</sup>State Islamic Institute of Purwokerto, Purwokerto, Indonesia

<sup>4</sup>Ibn Khaldun University, Bogor, Indonesia

**ORCID**

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5936-4277>

**Abstract.**

Islam discusses all aspects of life, including animal handling. This research aimed to explore the concept of animal welfare from the Islamic perspective. The research is a qualitative research using inferential methods. The data was collected using the thematic methods of the Quran interpretation (*tafsir maudhui*) on animals in the Quran and Hadis and analyzed using the *ma'na cum maghza* approach. The results showed that the concept of animal welfare in the Islamic perspective derives from three aspects of the animal position as beneficiaries for humans, as God's creatures, as communities, and part of macrocosmic. The construction of animal welfare in Islam accommodates ethical and legal aspects of treating animals which include basic food sufficiency, adequate rest, safety and comfort, and basic freedom of animal life. In general, the practice of animal welfare in Islam is theology-based ethics that is closely related to human functions as God's vice-gerents. Thus, the concept of animal welfare from the Islamic perspective is holistic sustainability that includes the welfare of all beings.

**Keywords:** animal welfare; ethics; Islam; Quran interpretation; theology; holistic-sustainability; *ma'na cum maghza*

## 1. Introduction

Islam discusses all aspects of life, including animal handling. The Quran declares a lot of aspects of animals: their position over other creatures, their function, and purpose of creation, and the procedures for treating animals [1]. A number of surah in the Quran have animal names such as al-Baqarah (The Cow), al-Nahl (The Bee), al-Ankabut (The Spider), al-Naml (The Ants), al-Adiyat (The Chargers), and al-Fil (The Elephant). These revealed the underlying animal usefulness both their remarkable existence and their meaningful way of life [2].

Arguing the comprehensiveness of Islam, Islam has ethical guidance in treating animals properly. Unfortunately, vice behavior is often encountered among Muslims in treating animals that do not meet ethical aspects, such as in slaughtering animals

Corresponding Author: L Safitri;  
email: [lis.safitri@unsoed.ac.id](mailto:lis.safitri@unsoed.ac.id)

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[3]. Slaughtering has complied with the requirements of halal aspects [4]. Meanwhile, animal welfare has received little attention, in slaughtering sacrificial animals indeed [5]. Another ironic behavior is the Muslim bearing of dogs which often show less affection due to the influence of the Syafi'i school of jurisprudence which states that dog saliva is unclean and declared as very heavy *najis* [6]. Whereas in Islamic tradition and history, dogs are noble animals and are narrated as loyal animals [7,8].

This ambiguity has been discussed by several scholars such as Foltz, who consider that hostility to animals departs from the anthropocentrism approach underlaid an Islamic framework of thinking [9]. Meanwhile, Derrida argued that Muslims tend to be defenses of Islamic tradition rather than animals [10]. Tlili's research illustrated the results of research on animal ethics in Islam have resulted in many mistakes at least for two reasons. First, descriptive apologetic discourse will not produce an understanding of the basic principles and ideals in understanding ethics towards animals. Second, the defensive nature will reduce the value of the Islamic tradition itself [10].

Considering the problems, it is necessary to render animal welfare in the Islamic perspective to exceed the descriptive approach. This research aims to find the concept of animal welfare using *ma'na cum maghza* approach in search of beyond the textual meaning. There are two aspects that will be discussed in the paper: how is the conceptual basis underlying animal ethics in Islam? How is Islamic ethics regarding animal welfare?

## 2. Materials and Methods

This research aims to study the concept of animal welfare according to Islam. This qualitative research is library research with the Quran and Hadis as the source of primary data. Data has been collected using *tafsir maudhui* (thematic interpretation) methods then analyzed using *ma'na cum maghza* approach introduced by Sahiron Syamsuddin [11].

## 3. Results and Discussions

### 3.1. Conceptual basic underlying animal ethics in islam

The former research stated that the narration of animals in the Quran can be divided into nine topics [1]. These nine topics can be summarized into three main points, namely animals as God's power, animals as creatures, and animals as beneficiaries for humans

(Table 1). Animal a God’s power is supported by the verses in group A. The verses in group B and H can be categorized into the animal as creatures. The others (C, D, E, F, G, I) rested on the topic of animals as beneficiaries.

The construction of animal welfare from an Islamic perspective departed from the third theme, animals as beneficiaries of humans. The different understanding will be decided in case rendering start from the concept from the animal as creatures and animal as God’s power. Taking the first and the second themes to underlie the interpretation of animal ethics would only lead to animal rights that prohibit taking benefit from animals altogether [12–14]. However, these three main categories could not be separated since all of them afford a circular-interrelated relationship. When taking advantage of animals, humans have not to turn away from the fact that both animals and humans are creatures. Likewise, animals have to be placed in the proper position as a mere creature, no more.

TABLE 1: The animal narration in the Quran.

Theme		Topic	Surah
Signs of God’s power	A	as the signs of God’s Power	An-Nur: 45, Fathir: 28, Yasin: 71, asy-Syura: 11, 29, al-Jasiyah: 4, al-Mulk: 19, al-Baqarah: 164
Animal as creature	B	as creatures	al-An’am: 38, ash-Shaf: 1, al-Hajj: 18
	H	prohibition to harm animal	an-Nisa’: 119, al-An’am: 136
Animal beneficiaries	C	as sustenance	al-Ma’idah: 1, 96, al-Hajj: 34, asy-Syu’ara: 133, an-Nahl: 14, Fatir: 12, al-An’am: 142-146, Gafir: 79, az-Zukhruf: 12, an-Nahl: 66, al-Mu’minun: 21, an-Nahl: 69, an-Nahl: 5
	D	allegory of the bad behaviour	Al-Baqarah: 65, al-Ma’idah: 60, al-A’raf: 166, al-A’raf: 177
	E	miracle of Prophet	al-A’raf: 73-77, Hud: 64-69, Taha: 18, al-Baqarah: 67-71, al-Baqarah: 259
	F	lesson for human	al-Ma’idah: 31, al-Kahfi: 18-22
	G	animal as a pride	Ali ‘Imran: 14, an-Nahl: 8
	I	involving punishment	al-A’raf: 130-133, al-Fil: 1-5

The concept of animal rights contradicts Islamic teachings. The Quran clearly states that animals can be benefited (surah al-Maidah: 1, al-Hajj: 12, al-Syuara: 133, al-Nahl: 14, Fathir: 12). However, the limitations of utilizing the animal are debatable and must be learned appropriately. The Quran condemns neglecting productive animals for no acceptable reason. Surah al-Maidah: 103 states that Allah is loath to *bahirah*, *sa’ibah*, *wasilah* and *ham*. *Bahirah* is a female camel who has given birth to five times with a male as the fifth child. The camel will have its ears cut open, then setting them free to pasture and prohibiting their use or slaughter. *Sa’ibah* is a female camel set free

because of a sacred vow (*nazar*). *Wasilah* is a male camel born who twins with a female camel. *Wasilah* is prohibited to slaughter except for idolatrous. *Ham* is a male camel after mating ten female camels. It must be rested and prohibited from its use or slaughtered. Making redundant animals for no acceptable reason is not allowed by Islamic teachings [15].

### 3.2. Animal ethics in islamic perspective

Some Hadis explain, both explicitly and implicitly, the Prophet's attitude towards animals. Hadis from Abu Daud stated not to burden animals with heavy labor nor to leave them hungry [16]. In another Hadis narrated by Ibn Majah from Suroqoh bin Ju'syum that one day a camel strayed into his garden and drank water from his pond. Rasulullah stated that it would be a reward for humans who help a living creature. This kindness is similar to charity [17].

A Sufistic story, narrated by Muslim from Abu Hurairah, tell about a slut woman whose sins were forgiven just because she helped a thirst dog. Dogs are declared as unclean *mugalazah* animals by the Shafi'i school. However, the kindness of the woman in feeding the hungry dog had brought her to heaven. This well-known story teaches that it is compulsory to help to a life of living things.

The other stories are told by Bukhari and Muslim from Abu Hurairah [18,19] about a dehydrated companion then quenched his thirst by drinking water from a well he encountered. After walking for a while he found a dog sticking out its tongue out of thirst. Then he returned to the well to bring water for the dog. When he told the Prophet, he answered that every good deed to a living entity is a charity and would be rewarded.

One of the main points in the aim of Islamic law is *hifz nafs* or self-preservation. Maintaining life is one of the five objectives of Islamic law to safeguard the religion (*hifz ad-din*), life (*hifz al-nafs*), intellect (*hifz al-aql*), property (*hifz al-mal*), and ancestry (*hifz al-nasab*). The right to life stands for all creatures, including humans, animals, plants, and others. Maintaining life means maintaining all aspects of supporting life in order to carry out their duties and functions of creation. Leaving animals to starve is prohibited in Islam. A Hadis narrated by Bukhari from Abdullah ibn Umar that there was a woman who will be tortured in hell because she has locked a cat up and let it starve to death [19].

In some cases killing an animal with an acceptable reason is allowed. The reasons could be for consumption, human safety, universal benefit, or others. Killing or slaughtering animals must be in a good manner and fill the lawful aspects. The Hadith narrated

by Muslim from Abu Ya'la stated that Allah commands to do good things (*ihsan*) if you want to kill then kill in a good manner, likewise if you want to slaughter an animal then do it in a good way [18]. Using a sharp knife and having to cut certain veins is the fastest way to kill and the animal does not suffer too long.

In another Hadis, the Prophet ordered to kill *auzag*, a dangerous lizard cause disease for humans. One strike killing has the greatest reward. Two strikes killing, it is good but not the best. The Hadith showed that it is allowed to kill the animals that threaten human safety and security in a good manner [18]. In another Hadis narrated by Bukhari and Muslim from Abu Hurairah[18,19], there was an ant bit a prophet who was resting under a tree in past. Feeling angry, the prophet then burned all the ant nest, then Allah admonished to kill only the biting ant, not all of them.

The other rules on slaughtering animals have to pay attention to animal conservation. The sacrificial worship which is held every year for Muslims recommends slaughtering the male cattle. It aims to keep animal conservation from animal extinction. Slaughtering too many female cattle disrupts animal reproduction and population.

The animal can be used for transportation by providing the right to rest and not exploiting their energy excessively. Through the Hadis narrated by Muslim from Abu Hurairah [18], the Prophet ordered his companions to speed up their journey in the dry season and avoid resting in dangerous areas for the animal. This commandment of the Prophet can be understood as respect for animals in keeping them from being disturbed or attacked by other animals or any inconvenience.

Exploiting animals for not justified purposes is prohibited. Rasulullah once admonished two companions who were chatting while riding a camel. The Hadis narrated by Abu Daud from Abu Hurairah [16] also states that animals are used to help humans in transportation, not as a platform for conversation. In the other Hadis narrated by Bukhari and Muslim from Ibn Umar [18,19] informs that a child tied a chicken and threw stones at it. Ibn Umar immediately released him and decreed that the Messenger of Allah forbade torturing animals to be killed.

Ensuring safety, Islamic ethics towards animals also prohibits harming or giving defects to animals. Surah an-Nisa: 119 prohibits tattooing the face of an animal, cutting off its ears, or blinding its eyes with the intention of giving a defect. Apart from deliberate defects by human hands, it is also prohibited to injure animals by fighting them. The Hadis narrated by Abu Daud stated that Allah curses those who play animals against them [16].

### 3.3. Animal welfare in islamic perspective

#### 3.3.1. Theology-Based Ethics

Like human, animals are recognized as an entity that was created by God. They have their own life, able to interact with their species and the other creatures with taking and give behave. In one of the stories told in surah al-Naml: 15-19, the ants interact with the other ants upon a valley to get into their dwelling avoiding Prophet Sulaiman and his soldier trampling.

Surah al-Anbiya: 79, An-Nur: 41, and al-Isra: 44 naratted that animals (as well as other creatures) “pray” (*yusabbihu*) to God. It can be interpreted that *tasbih* (sanctify) for animals performed by following *sunatullah* or natural law. His submission to natural laws which are God’s provisions is evidence of the servitude of animals to God’s power [15]. These verses and some of the Hadis that have been mentioned explained that animals have a spirituality other than physical.

Animals and humans are both living things with their eminence over each other. One of the human duties as God’s vice-regent is to convey creatures towards their function of creation [1]. Animals are created as God’s servant, community, and providing benefits to other creatures. It is human’s duty to treat animals within these limits. Thus, animals cannot stand above the position they should be, placed as deity or wonderment dignity, vice versa, positioning animals lower than human is not in accordance with the spirit of contextual reading of the Quran.

The concept of animal welfare in Islam is an ethic that is underlaid to God-consciousness. Freedom from hunger and thirst, freedom from discomfort, freedom from pain, freedom from fear, and freedom to express natural behavior is based on human awareness of their duties as God’s vice-regent and the existence of animals as God’s creatures. God’s rewards are waiting for those who fulfill animal welfare. Asad argued that reward and punishment in the Quran show goodness and badness. It means the absence of animal welfare in handling animals is considered as badness.

One of Islamic teaching on slaughtering is reciting *basmalah*. The recitation showed divine awareness when taking action against animals. In the name of God, it shows that the animal is a creature created by God. Humans have to ask God’s permission. Slaughtering animals is also intended to take advantage of animals as one of the purposes for which animals were created “as beneficiaries” and to express humans function as God’s vice-regent.

Interpreting the Quran and Hadis based on simply textual meaning would lead to anthropocentrism as argued by Foltz. The ineffective reading occurred because it does not include the reading of other verses which should be a holistic reading. *Ma'na cum maghza* approach reads the meaning goes beyond the textual meaning. This reading concluded that the relationship between animals and humans is not based on anthropomorphism but on divinity. Thus, the relationship between animals and humans (along with other creatures) should be an equal relation, not a hierarchy relation.

### 3.3.2. Fulfilling animal welfare means meeting the welfare of all living things

Meeting animal welfare in Islam means protecting the entire ecosystem of living things. Fulfill the animal needs to be free from hunger, it must protect the animal's food ecosystem. For example, for sheep to be able to eat, means that the grass and plant ecosystem must be well preserved. Likewise, to keep fish in the sea free from hunger, the marine ecosystem must be preserved. No doubt, in this case, humans—as God's vice-regent who has the most appropriate potential—have control and responsibility to regulate the preservation of the universe.

Humans have to fulfill animal welfare as well as fulfill all creatures-welfare. Surah ar-Rum: 41 reminds us that when humans are unable to regulate environmental sustainability, environmental damage and imbalance will occur. The damage will harm living things, including humans themselves. For example, when humans are not able to conserve forests in the mountains, it will affect water absorption causing water scarcity. The scarcity of water will result in drought resulting in difficulties for grass and plants to grow. Lack of grass will make the animal deprived of food, which results in animals being unproductive. The unproductive animals will only provide little benefit.

A holistic-sustainable principle of animal welfare should be implemented in animal handling. The macrocosm has a circular relationship that gives and receives one another. The relationship should not be severed so that it affects the other's life. For instance, cattle have a tight relationship with grass. Not only do cattle need grass, on the contrary, but grass also requires compost produced from cattle dung. Luxuriant grass full of nutrients will fill up and make the cattle free from hunger. Therefore, it is appropriate for humans to process cattle dung into compost to fertilize the pasture and ensure animal welfare.

### 3.4. How is animal welfare practice among Muslims?

*Qurban* or holy sacrifice is annual worship performed by Muslims following the sincerity and submission of Prophet Ibrahim and Prophet Ismail at the command of Allah. *Qurban* also can be understood to restore the function of animals as previously human offerings. For the Arabian, animals are the most frequently mentioned charity animals. It was not surprising since the Arabian has a close relationship with animals. Animals have become an inseparable part of life as food, transportation, pride, clothing, and so on [7].

The holy sacrifice must reflect the teachings of Islam comprehensively: in time, procedure, distribution, and animal handling. Muslims tried to meet religious requirements in *Qurban*, including to meet halal criteria. Unfortunately, this effort is inverse to animal handling which did not meet animal welfare. Before being slaughtered, animals are properly fed and rested. However, slaughtering is often carried out in front of other cattle. This creates fear for other cattle since smelling blood. It does not represent animal welfare in the holy sacrifice.

Likewise, the way animals casting before slaughter. Animals will be injured because of improper animal recumbent methods possibly scaring animal and fear. Some traditional abattoir of chicken in the countryside of Indonesia is a room partitioned for live chickens and butchering. Butchering, evisceration, cleaning, and carcass processing is just steps away from the live chicken laid down.

The dog is unclean animals and prohibited to consume with the result treated inhumanely. The argumentation of the Syafi'i school in categorizing dog as heavy unclean (*mugalazah*) effected some Muslims have a tremendous fear of dogs. Intending to cleanliness resulted in the absurd Muslim behavior in violent, tortured, shouting, cursing, and even refused to provide food for street dogs. This is an ironic attitude of Muslims towards dogs which should have the same welfare as other animals.

## 4. Conclusions

The conception of animal welfare in Islam has a holistic view because it is based on theology, not merely seeing animals as living things but they are one of God's creatures. The ethics of animals that are promoted by Islam allows taking advantage of animals because that is one of the goals of creating animals. The ma'na cum maghza reading resulted in an understanding that meeting animal welfare is fulfilling all creature welfare. It is a holistic-sustainable relationship among creatures.

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