



Truth Matters, We Verify

INCIDENT REPORT 2025

Debunking the Donkey Meat Hoax
A Case Study in Misinformation &
PR Nightmare

Published on:
Thursday, August 07, 2025

Fake News Watchdog

Email: info@fakenewswatchdog.org | **Web:** www.fakenewswatchdog.org



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About Us

Fake News Watchdog (FNW) is a global initiative dedicated to identifying, analyzing, and countering the spread of misinformation and disinformation in today's digital world. We stand at the forefront of the fight for truth, empowering individuals, media professionals, academic institutions, and civil society to navigate the increasingly complex information landscape with confidence and clarity.

Our Mission

Our mission is to detect and debunk false narratives, monitor disinformation trends, and strengthen public resilience through media literacy. Leveraging artificial intelligence, advanced fact-checking tools, and rigorous research methodologies, we work to uphold the principles of transparency, credibility, and informed public discourse.

Our Vision

We envision a world where access to accurate, verified information is a fundamental right, and where communities are equipped to question, verify, and challenge misleading content. A well-informed society is the cornerstone of democracy, and we are committed to fostering a culture where truth triumphs over manipulation.

What We Do

- **Fact-Checking Services:** Verifying claims circulating in media, politics, and public discourse.
- **Reputation Management:** Monitoring digital platforms for false or misleading content about our clients and delivering timely, evidence-based rebuttals to protect their public image and credibility.
- **Research & Trends Analysis:** Studying patterns in disinformation to inform public policy and education.
- **Educational Outreach:** Promoting media literacy through training, resources, and awareness campaigns.
- **Global Collaboration:** Partnering with international organizations, journalists, researchers, and digital rights advocates to build a united front against fake news.

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A Message from Our Team

At Fake News Watchdog, our mission is rooted in the belief that truth is not just a principle but a cornerstone of a thriving society. In an age where disinformation spreads faster than ever, the responsibility to uphold integrity in information is one we share collectively.

This report serves as both a reflection of the challenges we face and a call to action. It dives deep into the anatomy of disinformation, examining its sources, impact, and the societal vulnerabilities it exploits. By bringing these incidents to light, we aim to empower individuals, institutions, and policymakers with the insights necessary to recognize, combat, and prevent the spread of falsehoods.

Our work is not possible without the contributions of vigilant fact-checkers, dedicated researchers, and the trust of those who believe in a better-informed world. Together, we can build an ecosystem where truth has the power to outpace lies, fostering trust and accountability in every corner of society.

We hope this report inspires meaningful dialogue and decisive action. Thank you for standing with us in this crucial fight against misinformation.

– The Fake News Watchdog Team

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This white paper is intended for informational, academic, educational, media, and policy-making purposes. It explores the evolution and strategic redirection of India's space program from a development-focused initiative to one increasingly shaped by defense priorities.

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Publisher: Fake News Watchdog, Islamabad, Pakistan

Publication Date: Saturday, April 12, 2025

Email: info@fakenewswatchdog.org

Website: www.fakenewswatchdog.org



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Executive Summary

In late July 2025, the Islamabad Food Authority (IFA) raided a site in Tarnol, seizing over 50 live donkeys and more than 1,000 kg of meat. Within hours, social media exploded with unverified claims accusing well-known Islamabad restaurants of serving donkey meat. Posts naming popular eateries went viral, amplified by mainstream news channels, fueling public outrage and fear.

However, a Fake News Watchdog (FNW) investigation found these allegations to be entirely false. The IFA itself clarified on July 27 that there was *no evidence* linking any reputable restaurant to the seized meat. Unfortunately, this clarification came late, after the damage was done—many original posts had already reached millions, damaging reputations and triggering memes that mocked Islamabad residents.

Interviews with affected restaurant owners revealed deep frustration. While immediate sales losses were minimal, public suspicion about meat sourcing has grown, forcing eateries to prove their products are halal, hygienic, and legally sourced. Some are considering legal action under Pakistan's cybercrime laws.

Notable restaurants issued public statements and even inspection videos to reassure customers. Florida Steak House, Papasallis, and Malang Jan all demonstrated that their operations meet halal and hygiene standards, with religious and community leaders endorsing their practices.

Industry bodies like the Jamiatul Quresh Meat Welfare Association supported the raid but urged the government to establish a proper, regulated slaughterhouse in Islamabad. Experts stressed the importance of halal certification enforcement to restore public trust.

Pakistan's donkey trade is, in fact, a legal export to China, with strict regulations. The Gwadar facility processes these exports, underscoring the need to separate legitimate trade from criminal activity and misinformation.

This case is a stark reminder of how quickly misinformation can spiral in the digital age—turning a legitimate enforcement action into a PR disaster. It shows the urgent need for faster, transparent official communication and responsible public sharing of verified facts.

Background of the Incident

In the final week of July 2025, the Islamabad Food Authority (IFA) conducted a significant raid in the Tarnol area of Pakistan's capital, reportedly recovering over 50 live donkeys and more than 1,000 kilograms of meat. This operation quickly became the catalyst for a wave of sensational claims across social media, specifically alleging that the seized donkey meat was being supplied to several prominent hotels and restaurants in Islamabad.

Misinformation Spread and Amplification

The initial accusations rapidly gained traction on platforms such as X (formerly Twitter), Facebook, and TikTok. Users aggressively named specific establishments, including Malang Jan Bannu Beef Pulao, Janan Foods, Monal Rawalpindi, Ox & Grill Steak House, CFU, Kabul Restaurant – F7, Papasallis, and American Steak House, as recipients of the illicit meat. A screenshot of one of these posts subsequently went viral, amplifying the claim to millions of views and igniting widespread online debate and public concern erupted with posts under hashtags such as #DonkeyMeatScandal and #FoodSafetyPakistan, demanding accountability from city officials. The narrative's reach was further extended as it was picked up and broadcast by most major Pakistani television news channels, contributing to its rapid dissemination and public apprehension. Residents in Islamabad are horrified by the thought that they may have unknowingly consumed contaminated or unethical meat.

Official Responses and Clarifications

As the story's momentum grew and the reputations of the implicated restaurants faced severe damage, Irfan Nawaz Memon, Director of the Islamabad Food Authority, issued an official statement on July 27 to clarify the situation. Memon revealed that the IFA had received intelligence regarding donkey meat activity in Islamabad a week prior to the raid. He stated that IFA teams had worked meticulously over the course of that week to apprehend the perpetrators red-handed. Crucially, regarding the destination of the recovered meat, Memon emphasized that investigations were ongoing. While some preliminary reports suggested potential supply to foreign entities or distribution outside Islamabad, he categorically stated: "However, so far, there is no evidence linking any reputable restaurant or food chain to this meat distribution."

Following this official clarification, many of the original instigators of the claims began removing their posts. This action strongly indicates either a realization of their claims' lack of authenticity or a response to public criticism for spreading unsubstantiated information. Despite the removal of original posts, screenshots continued to circulate widely across various social media platforms and WhatsApp groups. Alarming, new entrants to the online discussion further exacerbated the situation by adding more unverified names to the list of accused restaurants and food stalls. The widespread dissemination also led to the creation of numerous memes, evolving into a meme war. Islamabad's residents were mocked by users from Karachi and Lahore, jokingly labeling them as donkey meat consumers. Thus turning a serious public health concern into an object of entertainment at the significant expense of the defamed establishments' reputations.

The recent controversy surrounding alleged donkey meat distribution in Islamabad, following a raid by the Islamabad Food Authority (IFA) in late July 2025, has highlighted critical issues in public information dissemination and its impact on businesses. Fake News Watchdog (FNW) conducted an independent investigation into the incident, concluding that the widely circulated claims linking prominent Islamabad restaurants to the illicit donkey meat supply are categorically false.

Methodology

The Fake News Watchdog (FNW) adopted a structured investigative approach to verify the claims associated with the “Donkey Meat Hoax” and assess their accuracy. The investigation relied on multiple independent and corroborated information sources, as outlined below:

1. Media Monitoring

FNW tracked and archived coverage of the Tarnol raid from national and local television channels, online news portals, and print newspapers between July 24–31, 2025. This step helped establish a baseline of how the incident was initially framed in the mainstream press and how narratives evolved over time.

2. Social Media Analysis

FNW collected and reviewed over 300 posts, videos, and images from platforms including X (formerly Twitter), Facebook, TikTok, and WhatsApp groups. Data collection focused on content shared under hashtags such as #DonkeyMeatScandal and #FoodSafetyPakistan, with particular attention to posts naming specific restaurants as alleged recipients of illicit meat. Screenshots of key posts were preserved for evidentiary purposes, even if later deleted.

3. Official Statements of Stakeholders

FNW obtained and examined official statements from the Islamabad Food Authority (IFA), including Director Irfan Nawaz Memon’s public clarification on July 27, 2025. Additionally, FNW reviewed public responses from named restaurants, industry bodies, and relevant community representatives. This included press releases, inspection videos, and recorded endorsements from religious authorities verifying halal compliance.

4. Cross-Verification

All collected information was cross-referenced to identify inconsistencies, verify factual accuracy, and confirm the absence of credible evidence linking the seized donkey meat to any reputable Islamabad restaurant.

This methodology ensured that FNW’s conclusions were based on verified, multi-sourced evidence, minimizing the risk of bias and strengthening the integrity of the investigation.

FNW's Findings

FNW's findings suggest a significant misstep in the IFA's initial communication strategy. It appears the story was prematurely or inaccurately shared with select media outlets. This initial "leak" inadvertently fueled the ensuing public frenzy. Only after the chaos had fully erupted did the IFA, through Director Irfan Nawaz Memon's statement on July 27, attempt to control the narrative. Crucially, Memon's clarification lacked details on arrests or the specific legal sections under which the case was registered, further contributing to public confusion and suspicion. This delayed and opaque response from the Food Authority directly resulted in millions of rupees in reputational losses for the implicated restaurants.

Absence of Credible Evidence Against Restaurants

Discussions with various restaurant owners, managers, and staff members revealed their profound concern. While most reported only a minimal dip in immediate sales, they noted a growing consumer apprehension. Patrons are now increasingly wary of meat from unverified sources, demanding proper documentation and stringent proof of origin for all meat served. Food outlets are consequently facing immense pressure to unequivocally demonstrate that their meat is halal, hygienic, and sourced exclusively from legal suppliers. The mere suggestion of potential exposure to foreign nationals and city-wide consumption of unapproved meat has intensified public anxiety, placing an unprecedented burden of proof on the restaurant industry. Several affected establishments are even contemplating legal action against individuals who initiated or promoted these false accusations, potentially under the Pakistan Electronic Crimes Act (PECA) Ordinance, to seek redress for the damages incurred.

Florida Steak House¹, a famous restaurant on July 29th, issued a statement condemning the spread of false information. They emphasized that all their meat is licensed, halal-certified, and subject to regular inspections to ensure safety and compliance.

Papasallis², another reputable restaurant, released a statement via social media, firmly denying all rumors regarding their meat quality, they reassured the public that their operations are regularly inspected and verified by relevant authorities..

¹ <https://url-shortener.me/2RTH>

² <https://url-shortener.me/2RTK>

Malang Jan Restaurant³⁴ posted a video on their social media addressing the rumors. The video shows an unannounced inspection of their slaughterhouse, revealing only cow, sheep, and goat meat, with no signs of suspicious activity. A separate video posted on July 30th featured Maulana Irshad Hazrovi visiting the slaughterhouse to inspect hygiene, cleanliness, and halal compliance. During the visit he stated "Spreading lies is a great sin. I've seen the reality here myself, everything is clean, halal, and trustworthy."

Public Health, Halal Certification, and Regulatory Gaps

In the wake of the raid, the Jamiatul Quresh Meat Welfare Association welcomed the IFA's action, while simultaneously calling for the urgent establishment of a dedicated, legally compliant slaughterhouse in Islamabad. This, they argued, is essential to prevent such incidents from recurring and to ensure regulated meat supply. Experts, including Dr. Siddique, a prominent health and ethics authority, further underscored the necessity of implementing and rigorously enforcing halal certification protocols to rebuild and restore public confidence. Dr. Siddique emphasized the broader implications, stating, "This raid sends a clear message. Pakistan supports responsible trade, but will not tolerate practices that risk lives." The incident, therefore, serves as a critical case study on the volatile intersection of public health, unverified information, and the severe reputational risks faced by businesses in the digital age. Following the raid conducted by the Islamabad Food Authority on an unlicensed slaughterhouse in Tarnol, other district and provincial food authorities have become more vigilant and are now actively pursuing illegal slaughterhouses. In one such incident in Battagram, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the Food Authority recovered several donkeys and a quantity of meat during a raid⁵⁶⁷.

Legal Donkey Trade in Pakistan

Pakistan currently exports 216,000 donkeys annually to China through its first and only legal donkey slaughterhouse, located in Gwadar, which began operations in February

³ <https://url-shortener.me/2RTN>

⁴ <https://url-shortener.me/2RTQ>

⁵ **Two held as donkey meat seized in KP's Battagram** (29th July)

https://www.dawn.com/news/1927431?utm_source=chatgpt.com

⁶ **Donkey meat seized in Battagram after Islamabad raid; two arrested** (30th July)

https://en.dailypakistan.com.pk/30-Jul-2025/donkey-meat-seized-in-battagram-after-islamabad-raid-two-arrested?utm_source=chatgpt.com

⁷ **Donkey Meat fear grips Punjab as more farms raided** (31st July)

https://en.dailypakistan.com.pk/31-Jul-2025/donkey-meat-fear-grips-punjab-as-more-farms-raided?utm_source=chatgpt.com

2025. The country's donkey population stands at 5.9 million, growing at a 2% annual rate. Donkey hides are highly valued in China for producing Ejiao, a gelatin-based substance used in fertility treatments, health tonics, cosmetics, and anti-aging products

A healthy donkey of an average age of 5 years in Pakistan costs over 100,000 rupees. In May 2025, Pakistan Customs also foiled a major smuggling attempt involving donkey hides worth PKR 80 million, stating mis-declaration. Exports processed via the Gwadar facility are legally recognized, highlighting the need for stronger regulation to avoid misuse and protect both trade integrity and public safety.

Public Responsibility

This incident serves as a stark reminder of the challenges posed by misinformation in the digital age, demonstrating how a legitimate law enforcement action can be distorted and amplified by unverified social media claims, leading to rapid and considerable reputational damage before official facts can be established. We strongly urge the public to act responsibly and avoid spreading unverified claims. Always consult credible sources and wait for official investigations before drawing conclusions. Sharing misinformation not only damages reputations but also causes unnecessary fear and confusion.

PR Nightmares

Why Every Business Needs a Dedicated Public Relations Strategy?

In today's hyper-connected digital world, information spreads at the speed of light. A single viral post, a WhatsApp message, or a shared image can spark outrage, misinformation, or customer backlash within minutes. For companies without a dedicated public relations (PR) team or professional, these situations often spiral out of control before they even realize something has gone wrong.

Social Media Requires A Quick Response

Many small businesses such as restaurants, hotels, local stores, and street food vendors—as well as small institutions and organizations, often lack the resources to monitor media, especially social media, around the clock. They find out about a damaging post or public complaint only when “the water is over their head.” By the time they try to defend themselves, issue clarifications, or deny false claims, the damage has already been done. In the digital age, public perception is shaped quickly, and silence or delayed response is often perceived as guilt or indifference.

Even for businesses that do employ someone to post promotional content or share event updates, these roles are rarely sufficient when a crisis hits. Managing a PR crisis requires more than just social media access; it demands strategy, experience, and fast, effective communication. Without a trained PR professional to guide the response, companies often fall into chaos, overwhelmed customer service lines, panicked internal communications, and no clear voice to reassure the public or defend the organization.

Media Management is a Nightmare

When such crises strike, even companies with established PR departments struggle to regain control. For businesses without one, it's a nightmare. The lack of structure and expertise often leads to knee-jerk reactions, conflicting messages, or worse, complete silence. In many cases, these responses do more harm than good. A single misstep can prolong the crisis, invite media scrutiny, and severely damage the brand's reputation.

That's why having a dedicated PR person or department is no longer optional, it's essential. Every company, regardless of size, should have someone on their team, or at

least on retainer, who is trained to monitor the media, understand the flow of public sentiment, and respond appropriately. These professionals are not just damage control experts; they are brand guardians, ensuring the company's voice is heard and trusted in both good times and bad.

For small entities with limited resources, this doesn't necessarily mean hiring a full-fledged PR department. Many agencies and freelance professionals offer scalable PR services tailored to the needs and budgets of small businesses. These services often include media monitoring, crisis communication planning, and rapid response capabilities. Even a modest investment in PR can make a huge difference when a business finds itself in the public eye for the wrong reasons.

Reputation Management

Having a basic PR crisis plan in place, identifying key spokespeople, preparing holding statements, and outlining internal communication procedures, can prepare a company to act quickly and decisively. This proactive approach often prevents issues from escalating and shows the public that the business takes accountability and transparency seriously.

Ultimately, public perception can make or break a brand. In a world where reputation is shaped online and opinions go viral, every business must be prepared to manage its image with professionalism and agility. Having a skilled PR presence, whether in-house or outsourced, is no longer a luxury, it's a necessity. Because when a crisis hits, the worst place to be is unprepared and unheard.

A recent routine incident, an official inspection by government food authorities, unexpectedly sparked a wave of misinformation and fake news across social media. False claims and exaggerated reports began circulating rapidly, causing unnecessary panic among the public. Fortunately, timely intervention by a vigilant Fake News Watchdog helped contain the situation before it escalated further. Their quick action in identifying and debunking the misinformation played a crucial role in preventing reputational damage to the businesses involved. This incident highlights the urgent need for a coordinated and collaborative approach among all stakeholders, government agencies, industry representatives, media platforms, and fact-checking organizations, to actively monitor and counter false narratives. In the age of viral misinformation, relying on reactive measures is no longer enough. Proactive communication strategies, media literacy, and strong partnerships are essential to ensure that facts prevail over fear and fiction. Only through unified efforts can we protect public trust and uphold accountability.

Conclusion

The “Donkey Meat Hoax” in Islamabad is a telling example of how misinformation can quickly spiral out of control, inflicting significant reputational and financial harm before facts are established. While the Islamabad Food Authority’s raid was a legitimate enforcement action, the premature spread of unverified claims—fueled by social media virality and amplified by mainstream media—created a false narrative linking respected restaurants to illicit meat distribution.

The Fake News Watchdog’s investigation, grounded in media monitoring, social media analysis, official stakeholder statements, and cross-verification, found **no credible evidence** connecting the seized donkey meat to any reputable Islamabad food establishment. Instead, the incident revealed critical shortcomings in timely and transparent communication from authorities, as well as the public’s tendency to share sensational claims without verification.

Ultimately, the “Donkey Meat Hoax” should serve as a wake-up call for regulators, media, and the public. In the digital age, reputations can be destroyed in hours—and rebuilding trust requires not only evidence but also systemic changes in how we handle and share information.

Recommendations

The “Donkey Meat Hoax” has exposed critical vulnerabilities in public communication, media ethics, regulatory responsiveness, and digital literacy. To prevent similar incidents in the future and mitigate their impacts, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. For Regulatory Authorities

(e.g., Islamabad & Provincial Food Authorities, Ministry of Health, Local Government)

- **Issue Timely and Transparent Communications:**
Regulatory bodies must release official statements immediately after any raid or enforcement action to avoid information vacuums that lead to speculation and misinformation.
- **Designate a Media Spokesperson:**
Assign an official spokesperson trained in crisis communication to handle sensitive matters and interact with press and the public in a responsible and informed manner.
- **Build a Rapid Response Digital Team:**
Create a small unit tasked with real-time monitoring of viral social media trends and false narratives, empowered to post clarifications, rebuttals, and updates promptly.
- **Strengthen Halal Certification Protocols:**
Reinforce and publicly disclose halal verification systems across all meat supply chains, and conduct regular, surprise inspections with publicly available reports.
- **Establish a Legal, Centralized Slaughterhouse in Islamabad:**
As called for by industry representatives, a government-approved facility would ensure traceability, hygiene, and ethical practices—restoring public confidence in meat quality.

2. For Media Outlets

- **Adopt a Fact-First Approach:**
Refrain from naming individuals or businesses without verified evidence from official sources. Sensational headlines should be replaced with cautious, verified reporting.
- **Fact-Check Before Publishing:**
Create internal fact-checking protocols, especially when stories rely on viral social media content.
- **Issue Corrections and Apologies Promptly:**
In cases of misinformation, media houses should issue formal retractions and public apologies with the same prominence as the original false reports.
- **Collaborate with Fact-Checking Organizations:**
Partner with independent watchdogs like FNW to verify sensitive claims and improve reporting accuracy.

3. For Social Media Users and the General Public

- **Avoid Spreading Unverified Information:**
Before forwarding or reposting sensational news, verify it with credible sources or wait for official confirmation.
- **Report Misinformation:**
Use platform tools to flag and report posts that spread false or harmful content—especially when it targets individuals, businesses, or public safety.
- **Promote Digital Literacy:**
Advocate for and participate in media literacy initiatives to better understand how misinformation spreads and how to combat it.
- **Support Ethical Businesses:**
Recognize the damage caused by rumors and continue to support food establishments that follow transparent and lawful practices.

4. For Affected Businesses

- **Establish Crisis Response Protocols:**
Restaurants and food suppliers should prepare communication strategies for managing reputational attacks and viral falsehoods.
- **Proactively Share Inspection Results:**
Make halal certifications, hygiene inspections, and supplier details available on official websites or in-store displays to build consumer trust.
- **Seek Legal Recourse When Appropriate:**
Businesses falsely accused online should consider pursuing legal action under the **Pakistan Electronic Crimes Act (PECA)** and other defamation laws to deter future false claims.

These recommendations are designed to turn a damaging incident into a learning opportunity for all sectors. In an era where one viral post can destroy a reputation, building systems of **trust, verification, and transparency** is not optional—it is essential.

