

FOOD SAFETY SURVEILLANCE AND COMPLIANCE TRENDS DURING BAZAR RAMADAN 2023–2025 IN LANGKAWI: A RETROSPECTIVE REVIEW

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Introduction

Bazar Ramadan is a popular seasonal food market in Malaysia that presents unique food safety challenges due to its scale, diversity of vendors, and high consumer turnout. Effective food safety surveillance is crucial to prevent foodborne illness and ensure compliance with the Food Act 1983. This study reviews three years of surveillance data (2023–2025) to identify compliance trends, enforcement outcomes, and recurring violations among food handlers in Langkawi.

Methods

A retrospective review was conducted using enforcement records from the Food Safety and Quality Unit, Langkawi District Health Office. Data included premises inspected, compounds issued, and premises closed under the Food Act 1983 during Bazar Ramadan from 2023–2025. Inspections were carried out by eight enforcement teams. Violations were categorized, and descriptive statistics were used to summarize trends. Chi-square tests were performed using SPSS v29 to assess associations between years and enforcement outcomes.

Results

A total of 738 premises were inspected across three years (2023: 329; 2024: 200; 2025: 209). Compounds issued increased from none in 2023 to 21 in 2024 and 19 in 2025. No premises were closed throughout the study period. The most frequent violations in 2024 included improper personal protective equipment, unhygienic food handling practices (e.g., use of jewelry/accessories), lack of certified food handler training, and absence of valid typhoid vaccination. Similar patterns were observed in 2025, indicating recurring non-compliance despite enforcement actions. Statistical analysis showed a significant association between year of inspection and compound issuance ($p < 0.05$).

Discussion

The findings highlight an upward trend in enforcement actions despite fewer inspections in 2024 and 2025 compared to 2023. Recurrent violations suggest that enforcement efforts alone may not sufficiently address food safety risks. Strengthening continuous education, certification compliance, and officer capacity is essential to reduce repeat offenses. Future interventions should focus on both empowering food handlers with knowledge and supporting enforcement officers with adequate resources to sustain compliance.

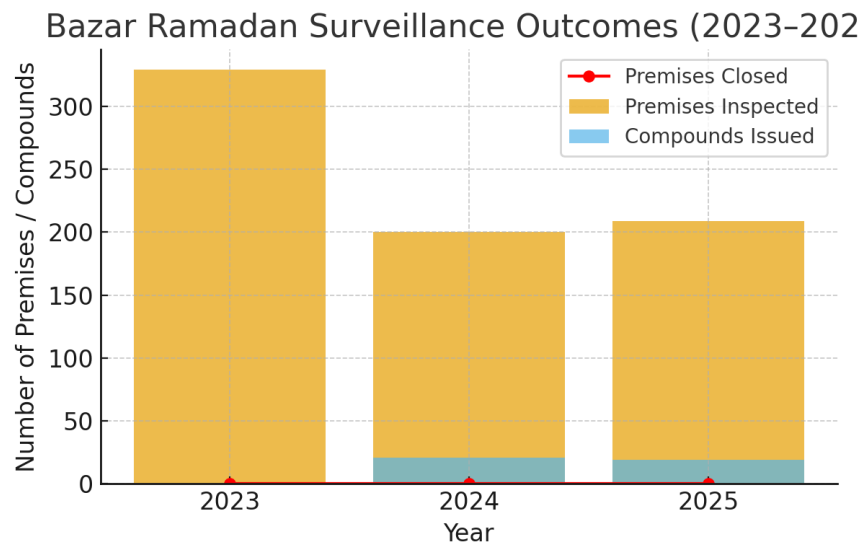


Figure 1. Bazar Ramadan surveillance outcomes (2023–2025)

Keywords: Food safety, enforcement, compliance, Bazar Ramadan, surveillance, public health, Malaysia