

GLOBAL NEWS



DIESEL TOO DEAR? TRY BUNNY RABBIT!

Christmas may by now be just a distant memory, as was the turkey many Taxi Globe readers will have polished off! But how many of you tried rabbit instead? Probably not that many, after all, the poor bunny is less likely to feed an average family than a plump turkey. But looking at life through Swedish eyes, the descendants of those naughty Vikings have found a new use for bunny rabbits... as fuel.

A report in the German mag, Der Spiegel, has written of stray rabbits in Stockholm being shot, frozen and then shipped to a heating plant for incineration because the cute bunny rabbit has been found to contain the perfect amount of animal oils and fats. The Swedes claim that the poor defenceless bunny rabbit is a menace and that both wild and stray pet rabbits are destroying open spaces. So if you are going to kill them anyway, why not put them to good use – and what better use than as a replacement for overpriced diesel?

Well one company has done exactly that. Konvex is a subsidiary of Danish company Daka Biodiesel, which makes automotive and heating fuels from vegetable and animal oils and fats. So the Swedes, not to be outdone by their Danish neighbours, have turned their hands to producing bunny fuel – although Taxi Globe readers will be delighted to know that the ears aren't used, after all, some standards must be maintained and bunny ears are surely copyrighted somewhere as... er, bunny ears!

But minus the ears, the Swedes are turning slaughterhouse trimmings into biogas, a methane fuel that runs taxis in Linköping, southern Sweden. Little bunny wabbits – sorry, rabbits - are not quite abundant enough to make large amounts of reliable fuel, so Stockholm also ships dead cats, cows, deer and horses to the same plant for processing. The good news is that a combination of bunnies, cats and horses etc don't smell that bad and that taxi drivers in Linköping say that regular passengers eventually get used to it.

There is currently no news on whether Rover and Lassie are to be added to the list, as man's alleged best friend is said to contain even better quality oils. But the Xmas turkey is safe at the moment, so the family can still polish them off at holiday time...

CABBY LOSES LICENCE AFTER SWEARING AT PASSENGERS...

Much closer to home than we normally find ourselves, Global News has heard about Elyas Haidari, a licensed taxi driver from Southampton who became the first driver to be caught by the in-cab cameras that are now fitted to Southampton taxis. Mr Haidari had picked up three lady pensioners and told one: "You die tonight." All three are partially sighted and the 24-year old driver was also filmed telling them to "shut up." The three terrified women were on their way to a day care centre.

The three pensioners complained to the day centre staff, who in turn reported the driver – although they were unaware that the trip had been recorded. Haidari was brought before the council's licensing committee after the women complained about his behaviour towards them. The Council officers downloaded the camera footage and were said to be stunned after hearing Haidari telling one passenger that "you die tonight."

He was also heard yelling that they should shut up and to "get out" when they reached the day care centre. Licensing committee chairman, Brian Parnell, said that without the camera in Haidari's car, his behaviour could have gone unnoticed. The cameras were voted in five months ago. He added: "It is a ringing endorsement of the council's recent decision to make the fitting of cameras mandatory."

AND FROM SOUTHAMPTON TO CALCUTTA...

It isn't just Southampton where cab drivers names are being dragged through the mud. In Calcutta – famous for its smoky atmosphere – it seems that they are just as bad, preferring tourists to their own people. Refusals are at an all-time high and it even reached the point where the Calcutta Taxi Association felt pushed into introducing a non-refusal service, but had to discontinue it when even these drivers started to refuse passengers.

A CTA spokesperson told Global News: "Taxi drivers nowadays don't know how to behave with passengers. Before 1984, drivers were appointed on a commission basis. The driver was entitled to 20% of the daily proceeds while the owner took care of all the costs. After the 1984, a new method began and drivers were appointed on commission only and paid the owner. They also had to take care of all the costs. The driver would have to clock 175 km on the meter each day before breaking even and then taking money towards their own expenses. Now as we head towards 2010, things have just got progressively worse."

The result has been an ever-increasing number of refusals and now it is almost impossible to get a taxi to take you beyond the city centre, unless you are prepared to pay well above the meter. Even the Calcutta police service have been brought in to try and put a stop to the refusals, but the drivers say that they just cannot afford to take some jobs as the empty return trip means that they lose money on the journey.

Perhaps a nice long recession might help...!

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