

Picture: IAN GEORGESON

Scientists in new 'dads' discovery

SCIENTISTS have created pigs, goats and cattle that can serve as viable "surrogate sires", male animals that produce sperm carrying only the genetic traits of donor animals.

Researchers say the development could speed up the spread of desirable characteristics in livestock and improve food production for a growing global population.

Additionally, it would give breeders in remote regions better access to genetic material of elite animals from other parts of the world.

It would allow more precision breeding in animals such as goats where using artificial insemination is difficult.

The study is the result of six years of collaborative work among researchers at WSU, Utah State University, University of Maryland and the Roslin Institute at the University of Edinburgh.

The researchers used CRISPR-Cas9 to produce mice, pigs, goats and cattle that lacked a gene called NANOS2 which is specific to male fertility.

The male animals grew up sterile but otherwise healthy.

After they received transplanted sperm-producing stem cells from other animals, they started producing sperm derived from the donor's cells.

Driverless cars can be made 'safe'

RESEARCHERS claim to have created a new technique for ensuring the "legal safety" of driverless cars.

Academics at Germany's Technical University of Munich say their system can guarantee an autonomous vehicle will not cause accidents as long as other road users abide by the law.

The algorithm attempts to verify that a driverless car will maintain "fail-safe trajectories at all times", meaning they move at a speed and direction allowing them to avoid collisions with other vehicles being driven legally.

Researchers led by Christian Pek presented an analysis of their concept in the journal Nature Machine Intelligence, stating that it can "drastically reduce the number of traffic accidents".

They went on: "We present a formal verification technique for guaranteeing legal safety in arbitrary urban traffic situations.

"Legal safety means that autonomous vehicles never cause accidents although other traffic participants are allowed to perform any behaviour in accordance with traffic rules."

The Government has backed several trials of the technology in the UK in recent years.



HORROR: Stephen Jones got behind the wheel of a First Midland bus just weeks after killing two people last January

Killer driver got right back behind the wheel of a bus

Man responsible for double tragedy carried passengers

EXCLUSIVE

NAINA BHARDWAJ and STEPHEN WILKIE

A BUS driver who faces a lengthy prison sentence today for killing two OAPs and injuring four passengers got a job driving for another public transport firm just weeks later, the Evening News can reveal.

Stephen Jones, 57, got behind the wheel of a First Midland bus and ferried unsuspecting fare-paying passengers without telling his new bosses of his crime.

He failed to declare that he was going to stand in the dock

at the High Court in Edinburgh over the deaths of Ian McKay, 78, and his 79-year-old wife Helen, from Bathgate.

Jones, of Whitburn will return to the same court today to learn his fate after he admitted causing the couple's death by dangerous driving and injuring his passengers on the B792 road, near Torphichen in January last year. Both vehicles ended up in a farmer's field following the collision. Nothing could be done to save Mr and Mrs McKay.

The Evening News previously revealed that Jones had obtained a driving job with the Royal Mail through an agency without declaring the charges he was facing.

Now, it has emerged that less than two months after the fatal incident, he landed a job

as a bus driver by leaving his application form for the position partially blank and not mentioning any prior incidents when given the opportunity to disclose them at his interview.

"First Midland were not aware of his involvement in any prior incidents before joining us"

DAVID PHILLIPS

David Phillips, Operations Director for First Midland said: "I can confirm that Stephen Jones was employed by First Midland for a short period from March 2019 until October 2019.

"First Midland were not

aware of his involvement in any prior incidents before joining us as his references and licence checks were all clear." First Bus added that Jones' licence had not been suspended because only the traffic commissioner has the power to do that and he had passed an independent medical check.

However, E&M Horsburgh's Depot Operations Manager, James McDowall, who was Jones' boss at the time of the B792 tragedy, said First Midland had delayed contacting him for references until shortly before he left their employment.

Mr McDowall said: "They did not contact us until October 1, 2019 after which point they did try and chase me for one two or three times."

Jones, who already had previous convictions for speeding

and careless driving, said the bus which killed Mr and Mrs McKay was running to schedule but he had been temporarily blinded by the sun seconds before the horrific collision.

The elderly couple were out driving their new Vauxhall Corsa for the first time when they were fatally injured.

Bus passengers suffered a number of injuries and told police they were gripping on to the seats in fear as Jones appeared to be driving too fast for the rural road.

Following his appearance and guilty plea last month, Jones was remanded in custody by the judge, Lord Doherty.

He is due to appear via video link from Saughton Prison to receive his sentence following background reports ordered by the judge.

Top civil servant accused of 'secrecy' and 'evasion'



OFFICIAL: Leslie Evans

THE Scottish Government has been accused of "secrecy" and "evasion" after its most senior official refused to say how much contesting a judicial review brought by Alex Salmond over the handling of harassment complaints had cost the public purse.

Leslie Evans, the Scottish Government's Permanent

Secretary, insisted it was "not possible" to quantify the expense of the court case which Mr Salmond won.

While the court awarded £512,000 to the former SNP leader, Scottish Labour deputy leader Jackie Baillie demanded to know the total cost to the Scottish Government.

However in a letter to the

Committee on the Scottish Government Handling of Harassment Complaints – which is probing how the allegations were dealt with – Ms Evans insisted it was "not possible to provide this figure".

She told the committee: "Dealing with this case was part of the normal range of duties undertaken by a number of

different civil servants, including lawyers in the Scottish Government legal directorate."

Ms Baillie, a member of the committee, branded that response as "another exercise in evasion".

She added: "If the committee is to uncover the truth about this sorry affair then the evasion and secrecy must end."