

# Getting the goat

Vandals set fire to Swedish Christmas straw goat yet again  
瑞典耶誕稻草山羊又遭人焚毀



A straw goat was burned down yet again in a Swedish city where torching it has become a Christmas tradition.

Gavle city spokeswoman Anna Ostman said someone set fire to the 13-meter-high creature around 3am local time last Wednesday. Only a **charred** wooden skeleton of the traditional Swedish Christmas symbol remained in the morning.

"It feels very sad," Ostman said. "We had really hoped that he would survive Christmas and New Year's."

Vandals have burned down the goat 24 times since it was first set up in Gavle in 1966 to mark the holiday season. It has also been smashed several times, run over by a car and had its legs cut off.

In 2006 and 2007 city officials **doused** it in fireproofing chemicals. Ostman said they stopped doing that because it discolored the goat, making it "look like a brown terrier instead of a yellow straw goat."

The goat is a centuries-old Scandinavian yule symbol that preceded Santa Claus as the bringer of gifts to Swedish homes. Many Swedes place a small straw goat underneath their Christmas trees, or hang miniature versions on the branches.

While city officials are always quick to condemn the vandals who set the goats ablaze, they have also become increasingly aware of the international attention the near-yearly attacks draw to Gavle, about 150km north of Stockholm.

This year the city Web site offers users a chance to follow the goat's fate via a Webcam, Twitter page and a blog in both Swedish and English.

"So sad that I can't celebrate Christmas with you all, but thank you so much for now, dear friends," the blog said. "I'm going on holiday now to get some rest but will of course be back for next Christmas."

Vandals are seldom caught, but in 2001, a 51-year-old visitor from Cleveland, Ohio, had to **face the music** when he was caught setting the goat ablaze — he was sentenced to 18 days in prison.

In 2005, the goat was burned down by two **arsonists** dressed up as Santa Claus and the Gingerbread Man. They were never caught.

瑞典一個城市的一座稻草山羊又被人縱火燒毀，這個行為儼然已經成為該市的耶誕節傳統了。

耶夫勒市女發言人安娜·歐斯特曼說，上週三當地時間凌晨三點左右，有人放火燒掉這座十三米高的稻草山羊。到了早上，該瑞典傳統的聖誕節象徵僅留下被燒成黑色的一座木架留在原地。

歐斯特曼說：「這讓人感到很難過。我們本來衷心希望這次它能撐過這個耶誕節和新年。」

耶夫勒市為了慶祝耶誕節而設置該稻草山羊，不過自一九六六年起，該山羊有二十四年遭破壞份子蓄意放火焚毀、開車輾過，或是腳被鋸掉。

二〇〇六年和二〇〇七年市政府官員將其先浸泡過防火化學藥劑。歐斯特

曼說，不過化學藥劑會讓山羊褪色，使其「看起來像是隻棕色的小狗，而非一隻黃色的稻草山羊」，所以後來他們就沒有再這麼做。

數世紀以來，這隻山羊就是瑞典耶誕節的象徵，據信它會分送禮物到瑞典家庭，地位更優於耶誕老人。許多瑞典人會在他們的耶誕樹下放一隻小稻草山羊，或是在樹枝上掛上迷你版山羊裝飾。

儘管耶夫勒市府總是在第一時間譴責焚毀山羊的破壞份子，但他們也注意到，近年的攻擊事件為這個位於斯德哥爾摩北部一百五十公里處的城市帶來越來越多的國際關注。

今年，市政府官網利用一台網路攝影機，透過「推特」網頁和一個瑞典文和英文的雙語部落格，提供網友即時追蹤這隻山羊的最新狀況。

該部落格寫道：「真遺憾今年我無法與你們共度耶誕節了，但謝謝你們讓我陪大家至今，我親愛的朋友。我現在要放假去休息了，但明年耶誕節我一定還會再回來的。」

破壞份子鮮少被抓到，但在二〇〇一年，一名五十一歲、從美國俄亥俄州克里夫蘭來的遊客，被逮到正在放火焚燒山羊，結果他必須為此接受懲罰——入獄服刑十八天。

二〇〇五年，這隻山羊被兩名身穿耶誕老人和薑餅人服裝的縱火犯焚燒，但這兩個人一直沒有被抓到。

(法新社/翻譯：袁星塵)

The charred remains of a Christmas straw goat stands in the town center of Gavle, northern Sweden, on Dec. 23, 2009.

PHOTO: EPA

十二月二十三日，燒黑的聖誕稻草山羊仍然佇立在瑞典北部耶夫勒市的市中心。

照片：歐新社

## face the music 承擔後果

You **face the music** if you accept responsibility for something you have done wrong. According to the article, the arsonist had to **face the music** for setting fire to the straw goat.

Examples: "I think you should just go home and **face the music**. You can't avoid your dad forever," or "I was surprised Ryan decided to **face the music** for stealing the cash."

若說你「face the music」，就表示你承擔某件做錯事的責任。上文中提到，那名縱火犯因焚燒稻草羊而得接受懲罰。

例如：「我覺得你應該回家面對現實，你總不可能一輩子躲著你爸吧」，或是「我很驚訝萊恩決定接受他偷錢而面對的懲罰」。

### 1. charred /tʃard/ adj.

燒黑了的 (shao1 hei1 le5 de5)

例：We came across a charred vehicle by the side of the road. (我們在路邊看到一輛被燒得焦黑的車。)

### 2. douse /daʊs/ v.

浸入水中 (jin4 ru4 shui3 zhong1)

例：I doused the T-shirt with petrol and lit a match. (我把那件T恤泡在汽油裡，並點燃一根火柴。)

### 3. arsonist /'arsnɪst/ n.

縱火犯 (zong4 huo3 fan4)

例：Police are looking for the arsonist who set fire to the post office. (警方正在緝捕郵局火警的縱火犯。)