

Kilometrage on used cars reduced, 4 arrests

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The used cars were “**rejuvenated**”, by having their **clocks turned back**. With the wrinkles of high kilometrage removed from old cars, these could be sold **for higher prices**, and maybe passed off as having “zero kilometres”.

THE ROGUES

Four men, two mechanics and two dealers, have ended up under house arrest, on the order of the investigating magistrate with the Public Prosecutor, in Como. They are **Marco Gandini, 51**, from Paderno d’Adda, near Lecco, his son **Alessandro Gandini, 26**, from Verderio, near Lecco (the mechanics who did the work), and the brothers **Domenico Marchetta, 43**, from Brienno, near Como, and **Alessandro Marchetta, 29**, from Binago, near Como (the two dealers). Another man, **Juan Carlos Rodriguez, 46**, from Calco, near Lecco, is also under investigation.

They are charged with trade fraud and criminal association; 12 dealers in Varese, Como and Lecco have also been searched and investigated for trade fraud.

THE MACHINES

The mechanism entailed the use of electronic devices that, when applied to the control unit, reduced the number of kilometres. The cost of each alteration varied from €50 to €200, depending on the level of falsification. The crafty mechanics had as many as 15 jobs a day. The total number could be as many as 1800 cars per year, and the total profit, as much as €3 million.

The men arrested acted using two vans; they would go to the dealer and issue an official invoice for repair work on control units and speedometers. As a result, the Revenue Police may soon investigate them also for issuing false invoices for non-existent work. The result is that many people from Varese and Como have bought cars in which the kilometrage had been fraudulently reduced. The Traffic Police in Varese, who carried out the investigation (which was subsequently renamed “Elisir”, a reference to the eternal youth of the cars), have retraced 150 vehicles and will soon publish the registration numbers.

THE VALUE OF THE CARS

You should know that, according to the market, the value of a car drops by 1.5% every 3000 kilometres. Therefore, the work entailed increasing the value of the vehicles by as much as 60% with respect to official listings. Not less important was the danger to general safety, because reducing the number of kilometres also changed the times when mechanical checks were carried out by the car manufacturers. The investigation is continuing in other areas: the cars were often collected by a car rental company near Bolzano; they would come to Como, and immediately afterwards, the two professionals from Lecco would be called to “rejuvenate” the vehicles.

di Roberto Rotondo Translated by Pellegrino, Laterza & Carretta (Reviewed by Prof. Rolf Cook)