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## Settlement assures Ohio woman's wild pets will be home for the holidays

by Sharon Abercrombie

Eco Catholic

Ask any animal lover: The best Christmas presents do not always come decorated with silver paper and red bows, but rather sounding with woofs, meows and chirps.

For Carol Deyo of Mt. Vernon, Ohio, her gifts have arrived early this year, in the form of big brown deer eyes, masked bandit raccoon faces and a favorable decision from a government agency of humans.

The *Columbus Dispatch* reported that the Ohio Division of Wildlife on Dec. 16 dropped the two counts of possessing wild animals it had brought against Deyo, a 66-year-old former veterinary technician. While the settlement prohibits her from rescuing more wild animals, it means Deyo's beloved friends -- Trooper and Patch, fawns she nursed back to health from serious injuries in the wild a few years ago; and the four abandoned baby raccoons she adopted -- will remain at her home under her care.

The deal also required she withdraw requests for a wildlife educator's license from the Ohio Department of Natural Resources and a captive-deer propagation permit from the Ohio Department of Agriculture, the *Dispatch* reported.

"We're so happy that there are no more hearings and that it's over with," a joy-filled Deyo told *NCR* during a recent phone interview. "The [Ohio Department of Natural Resources] can't touch them now."

The natural resources department did not respond to requests for a statement concerning Deyo's case.

In late November Deyo appeared in court after being charged in January with a fourth-degree misdemeanor for possessing wild animals. Had a judge ruling, expected to come last Friday, determined

that Deyo had to turn the animals over to the agency, Trooper, Patch and their friends likely would have been euthanized. (Eco Catholic has been covering Deyo's fight since last fall. Read the story here.)

Faced with the possibility that Trooper and company would be taken from her and her partner, Andy Black, Deyo reached out to the public through her Facebook page, which garnered more than 12,000 likes. A petition to Ohio Gov. John Kasich asking he allow Deyo to keep her animal friends collected over 15,000 names.

Love and compassion have triumphed, said her attorney Phillip Lehmkuhl in a statement published in the *Mount Vernon News*. Carol Deyo risked jail to save these animals, and 15,000 good people stood by her side, by signing petitions to Gov. (John) Kasich. They knew if God is for us, who can be against us?

Deyo told *NCR* that she is amazed and gratified by the outpouring of support she has received over these past few months. It has also reinforced what she has believed all along, that it is normal for people to be compassionate and want to rescue animals. If we didn't try to help them, we wouldn't be very human.

The former veterinary technician admitted that the decision prohibiting her from future animal rescues bothered her, and she hoped a better solution could be found.

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Considering my health issues, it is probably for the best, conceded Deyo, who is battling breast cancer and congestive heart failure.

With the stresses of litigation lifted, Deyo said she can now focus her energy on getting better, and loving on these animals every day.

And Facebook viewers will soon be able to share in the love of Trooper and his friends. Deyo plans to set up a webcam so people can continue to watch the interactions of her menagerie with everyone around them -- both humans and other animals.

Trooper and Patch just love people, she said.

And the deer also like other animals, including playing and running alongside Deyo's horses on the other side of the farm fence. And Donald, the crippled duck, a recent newcomer to the farm who lives in the barn with the deer, has left his impression on Trooper and Patch.

They all take turns grooming one another, Deyo noted.

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