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# Concord woman convicted of neglecting horses begins prison sentence

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A Concord woman convicted of neglecting three horses in Northfield began serving her 30-day jail sentence Wednesday, ending a years-long appeal process.

Joanie Osgood, 59, was taken into custody following a brief hearing in Merrimack County Superior Court, where she did not oppose a county prosecutor's motion to impose the sentence first handed down in 2015. Osgood spent two years fighting her convictions in three courts, but on Wednesday she forfeited that fight.

Osgood was initially convicted in Concord's district court in 2015 of three counts of animal cruelty and first appealed her convictions to superior court, where she was granted a new trial. After a jury found her guilty in May 2016, she filed a second appeal, this time with the New Hampshire Supreme Court.

On appeal, Osgood argued the evidence presented by prosecutors was insufficient to support her convictions. She did not contest that the horses were subjected to cruelty or inhumane treatment; rather, she maintained the state failed to prove that she in fact owned the horses at the time in question. The court's five justices upheld Osgood's convictions in late June.

In addition to the 30 days in jail, Osgood also faces suspended time; the remaining 11 months of her 12-month sentence are postponed for three years on conditions of good behavior. She is prohibited from owning or caring for horses during that three-year time frame.

She must also pay a total of \$34,126 in restitution to Live and Let Live Farm, an animal rescue facility in Chichester where the horses were taken in June 2014. The money is for the horses' boarding and medical expenses between that summer and October 2015, although the cost - to date for the animals' care are more than \$70,000, said <sup>1.5k</sup> Teresa Paradis, the rescue's founder and executive director.

"It's been a very long, hard journey," Paradis said following the court proceeding.

While the horses have made remarkable progress and are now more social, they're not yet ready for adoption, she said. Paradis said she and the farm's dedicated volunteers fought for the animals' survival, spending extensive time and resources on their rehabilitation and recovery.

Seeing Osgood taken away in handcuffs was "a huge relief," she said, adding, "finally someone is paying the price."

Police reported in 2014 that the horses were severely malnourished, dehydrated and experiencing muscle atrophy.

Osgood was one of two people arrested that year and accused of neglecting horses at the property of Bert Southwick, an elderly Northfield farmer. Southwick, who has since died, was a fixture in the community, having delivered eggs for more than seven decades on a horse-drawn buggy.

The other owner, Harold Kelley of Laconia, pleaded guilty to two misdemeanor counts of animal cruelty. As part of a deal reached with prosecutors, he agreed to pay \$6,000 to Live and Let Live Farm.

Assistant Merrimack County Attorney Cristina Brooks said following Wednesday's hearing that she hopes those affected can move forward knowing that justice has been served.

"There are resources in the state if you can't take care of your animals appropriately," she said. "It should never have happened."

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