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Whale Rescue

—Page 48

Whale Warrior

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A boy checks out one of Woodstock Farm's rescued goats in upstate New York.

Urban Homesteading's Dark Side

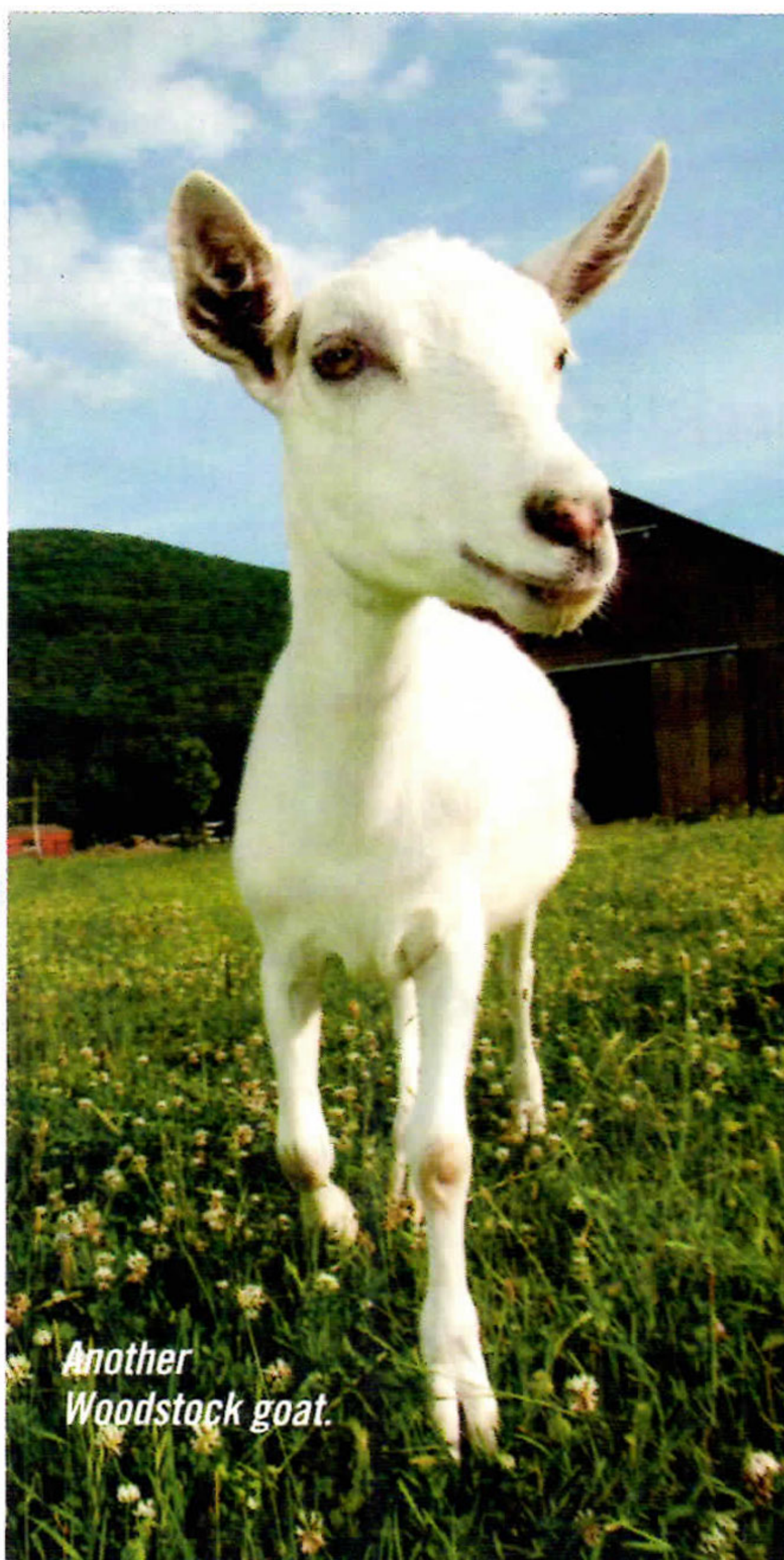
The Trend in Backyard Chickens and Goats has Left Rescues Overrun with Abandoned Livestock

BY JODI HELMER

Wayne Geiger fields up to 10 calls per week about hens and roosters in need of new homes. When Geiger founded Lighthouse Farm Sanctuary (lighthousefarm sanctuary.com) in 2002, most of the calls he received involved horses, sheep and cattle that were victims of neglect or cruelty. There were almost no requests to help chickens. Geiger blames the increased demand on the popularity of urban farming.

"We get a lot of desperate calls, people scrambling to find homes for their unwanted hens and roosters," says Geiger, founder and president of the 54-acre rescue near Salem, Oregon. "It's become a huge problem."

For many urban agrarians, chickens and goats are the perfect addition to a



Another Woodstock goat.

backyard farm, providing eggs and milk to complement bumper crops of tomatoes and peas. But when the novelty of having a chirping chick wears off or adorable kids turn into grownup goats that eat the landscaping, the animals are often surrendered to rescue groups or abandoned.

A few weeks ago, Geiger got a call about 13 chicks just three weeks old and still featherless in a plastic container left beside a dumpster with a note that said, "Please love us." He rescued the birds. These kinds of calls are not uncommon, Geiger says. In fact, abandoned and unwanted chickens pose the biggest challenge for animal rescues.

Woodstock Farm Animal Sanctuary (WFAS, facebook.com/woodstockfarm), a 23-acre refuge in upstate New York that rescues, rehabilitates and cares for farm animals, has also seen a spike in the number of calls about chickens and

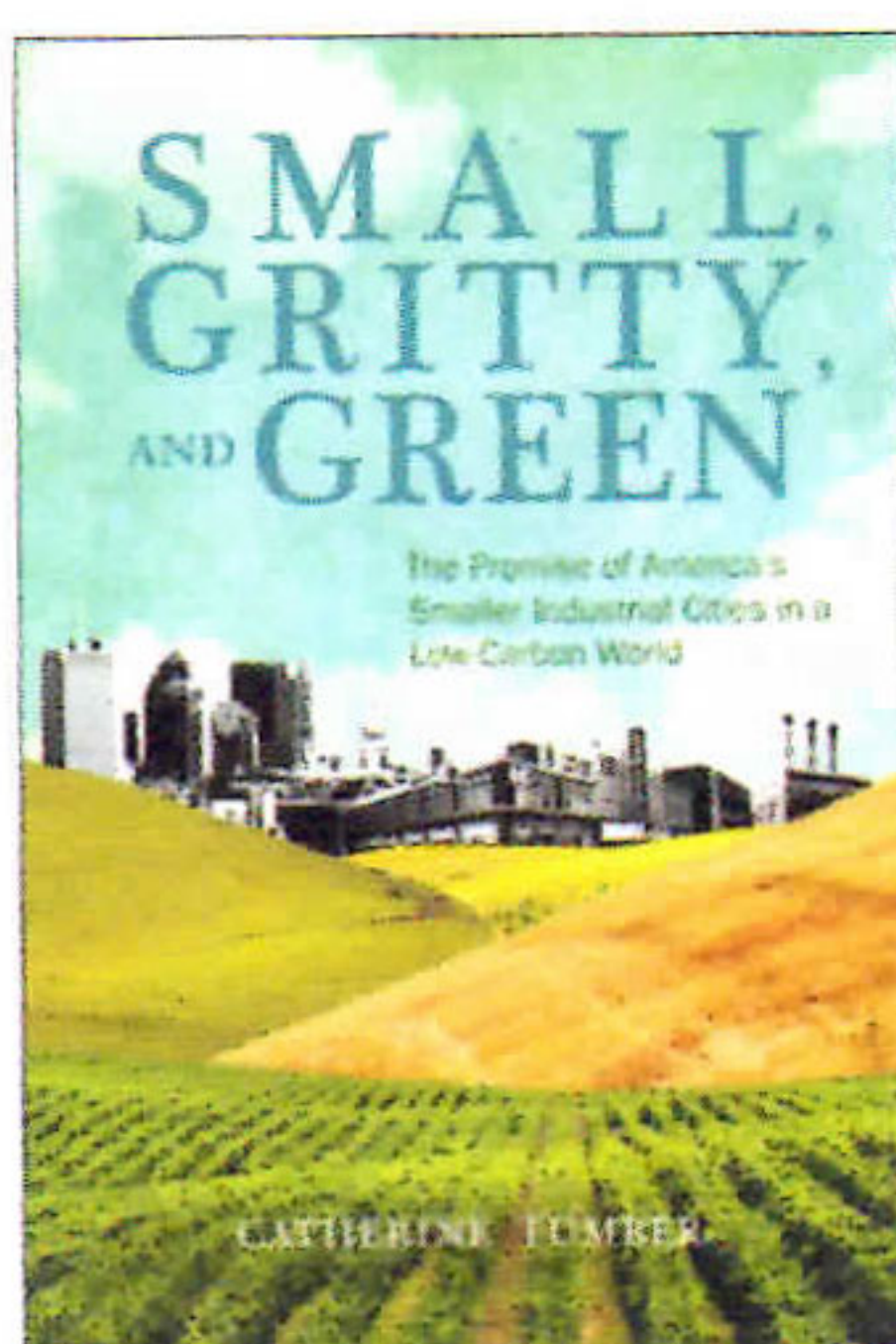
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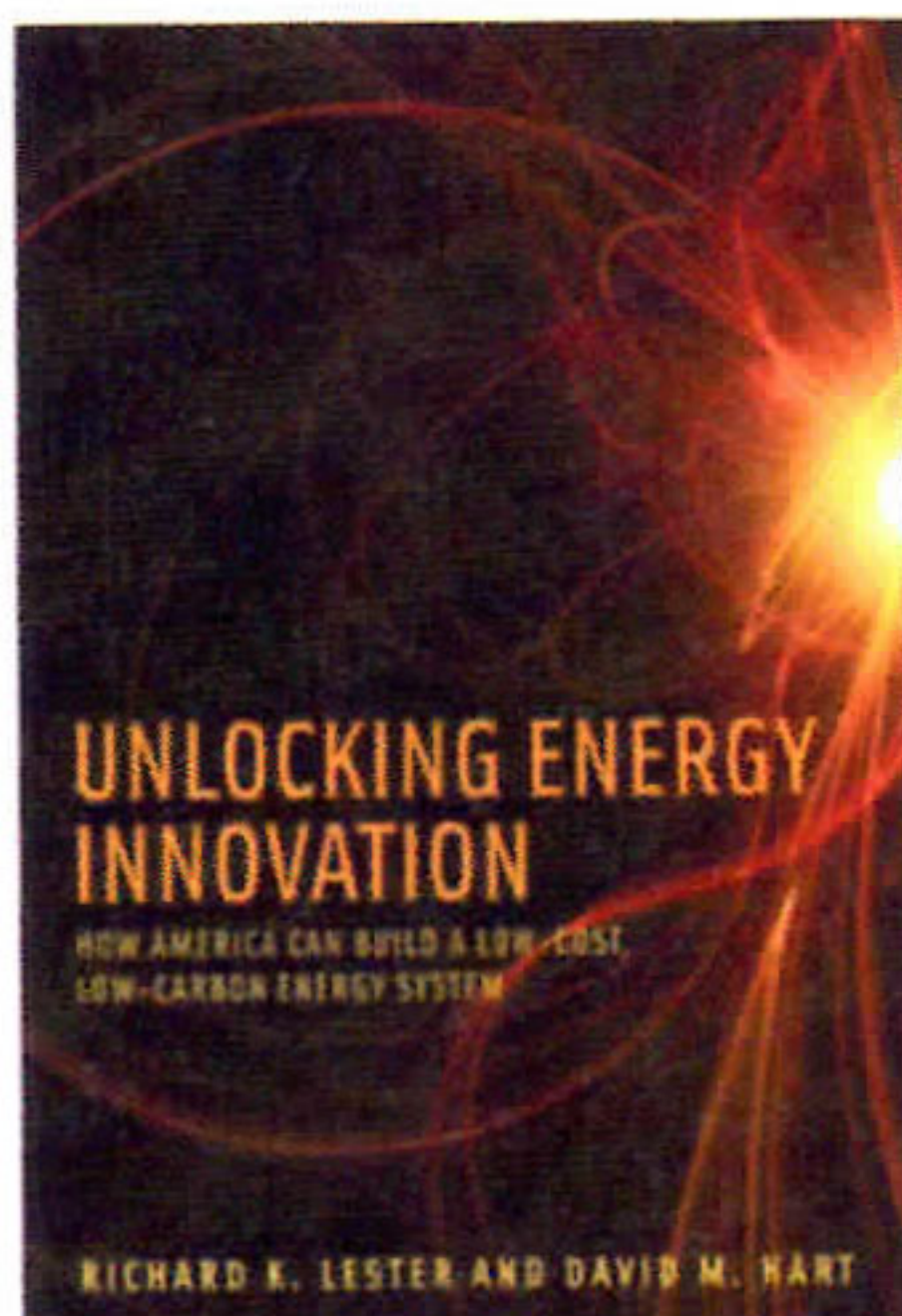
The Promise of America's Smaller Industrial Cities in a Low-Carbon World

Catherine Tumber

Tumber has laid out a coherent path for recovery and revitalization of these small-to-medium-sized industrial cities. . . . Her prescriptions do not rely on pity but on how to play a winning hand."

— William A. Johnson, Jr., Rochester Institute of Technology, Mayor of Rochester, 1994-2005

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Brown also worries about overpopulation. The fate of male goats, unable to produce milk and often prohibited by city ordinances, is also a concern.

"We get a lot of calls to take in unwanted goats, especially male goats," says Brown. "A lot of people think it would be fun to have goats but after a while they change their minds."

The goats at WFAS range from kids that were separated from their mother at birth and scheduled for the auction block to a homeless goat found wandering around an urban park in Brooklyn, New York. As shelters and sanctuaries struggle to manage increasing demands to find homes for livestock, responsible owners also fret over the fate of their flocks. According to Brown, hatcheries are only 90% accurate when sexing newborn chicks. When chicks turn out to be roosters—prohibited by most city ordinances—their owners have no choice but to find them new homes.

"We get more calls for roosters than any other animals," says Brown, noting that Woodstock Farm Animal Sanctuary currently has 50 roosters in residence.

When sanctuaries are full and municipal animal shelters lack the facilities to house hens and roosters, the birds are often euthanized. Knowing the fate of these animals rests in their hands, animal shelters and sanctuaries feel increased pressure to take in unwanted farm animals.

"It puts a tremendous burden on sanctuaries," says Geiger. "As the need grows, we're faced with figuring out where to find the funds and the space to help." **E**

JODI HELMER is the author of *The Green Year: 365 Small Things You Can Do to Make a Big Difference* (Alpha). Visit her at jodihelmer.com.

© CHICKEN RUN RESCUE



A rooster from Chicken Run Rescue in Minneapolis.