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Welcome to American Mosaic from VOA Learning English.

I'm Kelly Jean Kelly.

On the show today, we play music on a new album from Sean Kingston.

We also answer a question about casinos in the United States.

But first we go to Poolesville, Maryland, where some farm animals have found a safe home.

Poplar Springs Animal Sanctuary

More and more Americans are raising chickens, pigs and other food animals at their homes in urban and suburban areas. Many of these people are doing the job responsibly. But others are not. As a result many farm animals are being found abused, alone or dead. Steve Ember tells about a safe place for mistreated livestock.

Ali Mirsky raises chickens in a quiet suburban neighborhood near Washington. But she is not a traditional farmer.

She is among a growing number of Americans who call themselves homesteaders. They choose to raise their own food in a city environment.

"I like the idea of seeing and caring for animals but also having access to fresh, healthy produce like eggs or meat."

Ms. Mirsky says she uses common sense methods in caring for her backyard chickens.

"For me it's providing fresh water, fresh food that's nutritionally balanced and healthy and also access to the outdoors. So it is a commitment and it is a responsibility when you care for a living thing."

But not all urban farmers are as responsible.

Terri Littlejohn is an official with the Prince Georges County, Maryland, government. She is with the Animal Management Division.

In addition to dogs and cats, Ms. Littlejohn says her department is getting more and more calls for farm animal rescues.

"We've picked up pigs that are in someone's backyard, we've picked up goats, we've picked up chickens, we've picked up hens. We're seeing a lot of animals that have been abused and a lot that have been neglected."

The animal shelter where she works is not set up for farm animals. So Ms. Littlejohn has been sending animals to a 160 hectare refuge in rural Maryland.

The Poplar Spring Animal Sanctuary is for abused and uncared for animals. Littlejohn has just brought pigs to the center. They will live out their natural lives here along with 200 other saved farm animals.

Terry Cummings and her husband Dave established the center in 1996.

Ms. Cummings knows every one of the animals by name.

In addition to the pigs, the refuge is home to other animals urban farmers tried to raise.

"People don't know all the responsibilities and all the time and money that really goes into properly caring for these animals and it really ends up being an abusive situation for the animals because they don't have the knowledge or the desire to do it properly."

And it is a growing problem she says.

"There's been this whole back-to-the-land movement and so there's been a real increase in this over the last few years and we've seen more and more problems associated with it."

But for these lucky new arrivals, Poplar Farm is a chance at a new beginning.

American Casinos

Today we answer a question from China about casino development in the United States.

A casino is a place where people can win -- or lose -- a lot of money. They do this by gambling -- playing cards, dice or other games of chance. They could also win money by predicting the results of horse races, football games and other activities.

Gambling has a long history in the United States. Even in colonial times, the government permitted lotteries. In a lottery a person buys a chance to win money or other prizes. Money raised in this way helped support the development of the colonies.

Experts say the first casinos in America were saloons. People went to saloons to buy alcoholic drinks. But some of these businesses let people play card games or throw dice for money. Later, gamblers began to use riverboats, especially on the Mississippi River, to play games for money.

It seems that Americans have always had concerns about gambling. Some thought it was a sign of moral corruption. Gambling was also often blamed for increasing crime. Others worried that the financial risks people took when gambling would ruin the economic future of the country.

There have been bans on gambling and periods of legal gambling in the United States. In the 1800s, most states banned many kinds of gambling. However, the discovery of gold in the west renewed the activity. And many states eased their gambling laws during the Great Depression of the 1930's.

Today Hawaii is the only state to ban all forms of gambling. The most popular places for legal gambling are casinos. The most famous casino city is Las Vegas, Nevada. Illegal crime organizations from New York were responsible for developing much of Las Vegas in the early to middle 20th century.

Now, Las Vegas is filled with casino/hotels of all sizes. Many are beautifully designed and offer many services. An example is the Luxor, a huge, black pyramid-shaped building. It is named for the ancient city in Egypt.

The Luxor has thousands of gambling machines, four large swimming pools, almost thirty stores and a chapel where people can get married. A thirty-four meter tall reproduction of Egypt's Great Sphinx of Giza stands in front of the pyramid.

The Bellagio in Las Vegas has even more to offer. The Bellagio has its own man-made lake, more than three hectares in size. Huge fountains light up the property. The water jumps up and down, and is programmed to move to music.

The hotel is home to a big, beautiful chandelier. This special lighting fixture was hand-blown by the famous glass artist Dale Chihuly. The Bellagio also has its own art gallery and, for plant lovers, a botanic garden.

Many Las Vegas casinos also offer shows that include famous singers like Celine Dion and Elton John. Broadway plays and musicals that can be seen during the next year include "The Book of Mormon," "War Horse" and "Once." And Cirque du Soleil is very big in Las Vegas. The company currently has eight shows on offer in the city.

"Back 2 Life" for Sean Kingston's Career

Reggae hip-hop artist Sean Kingston has released his first album since a serious accident almost took his life two years ago. Avi Arditti tells about "Back 2 Life" and plays some songs from the album.

Sean Kingston suffered several broken bones, water in the lungs and a torn aorta in the 2011 boating accident near Miami Beach, Florida. Doctors said he was lucky to survive.

Kingston has said that he feels God gave him a second chance. He said the experience inspired the title song of his new album.

The 23-year-old musician was born in Miami but raised in Jamaica. His first big hit was the song "Beautiful Girls" from his 2007 album "Sean Kingston."

On his new album, Sean Kingston sings "Rum and Raybans," a song about the party life of the young and famous. Rum is an alcohol linked to the Caribbean islands. Raybans are a very popular and costly kind of sunglasses.

Several other artists provide guest performances on "Back 2 Life," including T.I., Wale and 2Chainz. We leave you with Sean Kingston performing "Beat It" featuring Chris Brown and Wiz Khalifa.

I'm Kelly Jean Kelly. Our program was written and produced by Caty Weaver. Julie Taboh provided additional reporting.

Do you have a question about American life, people or places? Send an e-mail to learningenglish@voanews.com. We might answer your question in a future show. You can also visit our website at learningenglish.voanews.com to find transcripts and audio of our shows.

Join us again next week for music and more on American Mosaic from VOA Learning English.