

KARAKUL SHEPHERDS ALLIANCE ~ *where the flocks gather*

Hello

We are writing to personally introduce and explain to you our project, the Karakul Shepherds Alliance. Our intention is to encourage the survival of this breed in the US by providing breeders and owners with information, services, assistance, and an easy way to communicate with each other. Our primary tool is a website; although for those who do not use the Internet, personal contact is available.

There is no membership requirement. Of national interest is an annual count of Karakuls in the US, relying on totals given to us by breeders. This count is for all Karakul flocks, registered or not. Principally, we are offering a different perspective on the classification of Karakul sheep in the US and accordingly the role of a registry.

Most Karakul sheep in this country are not registered. It is a very large untapped gene pool. Some are large flocks out west, many are with Middle Eastern shepherds supplying meat for ethnic families, others are hobby flocks whose shepherds have decided that registration papers are not important. The common thread is—these people love Karakul sheep and want to keep them around; but certificates of registration are almost meaningless to them. Yet these Karakuls are waiting to be 'discovered' as pureblood sires and dams.

Then the question arises—How do you bring these commendable, isolated, unregistered Karakul sheep into a Flock Book acceptable to breeders who have registered sheep?


We decided the Karakul Shepherds Alliance could provide that service. The Alliance project was initiated by long-term Karakul breeders who have the wisdom from decades of Karakul experience to evaluate these sheep. Certificates of Registration can be issued from our Open Flock Book. We are aware of the physical differences in many of the US bloodlines. We are currently compiling these details into historical outlines of the currently known Karakul bloodlines. The pictures themselves are fascinating to examine; and then there are the stories behind the breeders.

Bringing sheep into a registry is no different now than thirty years ago, when the AKSR Registry was in its beginnings, except for the experience gained by the shepherds who remain dedicated to this beautiful, intelligent breed of sheep. We have developed a simple protocol that will allow these *new other* Karakuls to be registered, when desired. Without this option, the currently registered Karakuls will deplete their gene pool and become inbred, lose size, decrease vigor, and experience reproductive failures. And we will lose them. Karakul Shepherds Alliance will prevent that from happening.

Please visit our website karakulshepherds.org to learn more about us. The Alliance's three main goals are explained on our **About** page. Requests for Karakul sheep are listed on our webpage titled **Sheep Wanted**; check it regularly for possible sales. Please consider participating in the annual flock count; a form is included behind this letter or online at **Karakul Census**. On the website front page you are welcome to add your comments to the blog and tell us what works for you on your farm or ranch while shepherding. If you like what you see, please spread the word about us.

Thanks for your interest in one of the most unique and distinctive sheep on the planet. We welcome your comments and suggestions.

With our best regards,


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Enclosures:

1. **Farm and Flock/Census** Form
2. **Traditional Flocks** and the Challenges of Tracking Landrace Flocks
These forms are also available to be printed from the website under the **Registry** tab.