



KARAKUL SHEPHERDS ALLIANCE ~ where the flocks gather

Karakul Tails & Tales

Late Fall 2024

Volume 6, Number 2

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Karakul Alliance Goals

1. find flocks & count Karakul sheep
2. build a community of Karakul shepherds

The Alliance has been working toward these objectives since 2014.

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### PLEASE NOTE:

*Fees have not been required for any of our services for 10 years.*

Starting our 11th year, we will have Registry Fees for registry services in 2025.

*I hope you will consider a donation to the Alliance this season. There's a Donate form on the Right sidebar of most Website pages, also PayPal & old-fashioned check. Our Simple Business*

*Checking now requires \$1,000 minimum balance to avoid a monthly fee. A little extra \$\$ would help a lot. Thanks a bunch! 😊*

*~ Deborah*

**"Registries are only as good as we breeders make them."**

**Words of wisdom from the late Page Jacobs ~ Dec 8, 1988**

**Photos:** by Taylor Johnson, Jelly's Ferry Farm, Rio Vista, California. There's a 4<sup>th</sup> flock image in the email Newsletter

## Happy New Year 2025

Welcome! The July 2023 survey results were published via email a year ago on January 3, 2024. The paper version is now available under the [Newsletter](#) tab, as well as the summary document [What we Learned from the Survey](#). The Late Summer 2024 issue emailed on Dec 20<sup>th</sup> was a discussion of NZ Karakuls in the US; carrying over to this Newsletter American Karakul Genetic Analysis is a main topic

### Lambtown Festival, Dixon, California

My Fall vacation started in 100°+ heat at Lambtown in Dixon, California on October 5<sup>th</sup> with Penny Gelhaus & soon-to-be Karakul breeder Taylor Johnson. Penny entered three Karakul fleeces in the Other Breeds class, two placed 2<sup>nd</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> from Judge Letty Klein, and later sold. The smaller third fleece was not for sale as Penny wanted to spin-up the pretty black & white lamb's wool. She was pleased with her first time showing fleeces! **We need more Karakul fleeces in shows**, even without a separate class for our breed. Consider options like Other Breeds, Primitive, or Dual-coated. Let's show off Karakul fleeces!



At the Festival, I talked for a long while with Jordon Reed from [We Love Sheep](#), the shearing company doing the demo at Lambtown. I remembered that company did the shearing in 2018 for the enormous flock of about 900 Karakuls. It was discovered right after the 2017 census was completed. The owner swore the shearers to secrecy about location & number of sheep. The shearers posted a handful of photos with just enough information that added ~ 1,000 Karakuls to the census estimate and changed the talk I had planned for the Livestock Conservancy Annual Convention, October 2019 in Santa Rosa. ~1,000 Karakuls was mind bending! I named them the S Secret Flock; however, Jordan didn't think the flock existed any longer. It was in Ferndale, CA, a northern coast community; I had always envisioned those sheep in the north-central California desert. Jordan's eyes twinkled as he recalled that 2018 shear job. He gave me the shearers' names who would know more if the flock was still around.

**I love connecting with sheep people and collecting Karakul history & stories!**

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This Newsletter is dedicated to Karakul breeders from the Old Country Trip to Peter Neverov—Tulelake, California, on the Oregon border

After the informative talk with Jordan & a yummy lamb gyros, Taylor Johnson & I hopped in her Dad's pickup towing Penny's stock trailer and headed north. We had non-working trailer lights due to a scheduling glitch, grabbed California's renowned In-and-Out burgers for



dinner, were pulled over by California Highway Patrol and let go, finally arriving at the Bed & Breakfast in Dorris, CA at midnight. Good fortune had us enjoying a delicious leisurely breakfast with

the B&B owners who have a flock of about 30 colored Corriedale sheep at their farm out of town. Peter Neverov texted Taylor that he was ready and we



arrived at his place about noon. Peter is a native

Uzbek, humble, funny & wise. His son Andre helped move the sheep where they were supposed to be. Peter has kept remnants of the Dancer flock isolated since 2007—descendants of CC Young's 3rd import in 1914, shipped across Canada from East to West, then Alberta to Northern Calif, about 1930s to 50s



NEW PROCESS!

Online Reg Application

The [KSAR Registry Webpage](#) now has a [Registration Application Online](#).

Several breeders used it summer 2024, with all positive feedback & one negative (too complicated). Try it & tell me what you think!

Contact

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Shepherd

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*Thanks for helping the
Alliance to connect
with so many breeders
while we build the
Karakul database.*

*Please keep in touch.
We welcome your
comments and
suggestions.*

**The 2025 Work Order-
Fee Schedule is posted on
the KSAR Registry
website**



**Don't forget the printable
Lambing Record Table
under the Karakul Sheep
tab on our website**

Peter raises his elegant sheep 'to be as wild & natural as they can be', yet buyers find them fairly easy to work with given patience. We tucked two ewe lambs into a box between us on the front seat & Taylor drove south for 6 hours to Rio Vista. The lambs took turns telling us how much they missed mom & dinner. Here's a tip if you ever find yourself without trailer lights—red magnetic battery bicycle lights are an easy way to indicate the trailer backend, until you get the main lights fixed. They were quite convincing on the way home. What a fun, exhausting, memorable trip! Peter's Karakul story will be on the [Bloodline](#) page in the future

American Karakul Genetic Analysis

In the previous issue I wrote almost all I currently know about New Zealand Karakul influence on our American Karakul population. Because ancestor information on the NZ import is significantly lacking, I believe with all my heart that it is past time for US breeders to consider genetic analysis to generate the baseline profile of what an American Karakul is genetically.

This past April I asked a retired Karakul breeder if she would consider donating some funds to The Livestock Conservancy (TLC) on behalf of the American Karakul for genetic testing. My monetary request was then posted on the Alliance Facebook page and made available for discussion. This was inappropriate and I hope it does not happen again. I asked a private question and did not expect it to become public discussion. It was unnecessary and caused confusion for several people. For myself, I was a week away from departure for a well-deserved vacation, while being dreadfully burned out after having worked so many extra hours on database preparation over the winter. I admit I did not do a good job providing information when I asked the retired breeder for a donation. I'm now offering up this explanation to everyone, not just shepherds who post to the Alliance Facebook Group.

My first mistake, I called it Genetic Testing instead of Genetic Analysis. They are different. And to briefly clarify a third phrase, Genetic Collection is storage in the USDA Germplasm vault for doomsday extinction banking; although some research has occurred on samples. Collection will be in another Newsletter. Yes, Collection is needed, but most importantly American Karakuls need DNA Analysis. When complete, breeders will then have the opportunity to DNA Test their sheep if desired. *Proposing Karakul DNA analysis is not an attack on anyone's breeding practices or sheep. This is about maintaining the integrity of the breed.*

Genetic Analysis will inform future breed conservation. It would provide a complete baseline profile that displays what an American Karakul is genetically. Ideally, we would have samples submitted from most or all of the 15 American Karakul bloodlines, as well as some high percentage NZ-AM sheep, hopefully some Awassi X Karakul, and other Karakul crosses.

With most of the bloodlines represented, the American Karakul genetic panel would become a reference when compared with influences from other breeds. Genes could be identified that would indicate a crossbred rather than a purebred Karakul. This is the genetic project I was asking a donation for, American Karakul Genetic Analysis.

In summer 2021, The Livestock Conservancy (TLC) Breed Association Manager talked with me about a sheep breed genetic profile compiled by the University of California, Davis. TLC recommends DNA analysis for a breed when pieces of the registry record book are missing, as is the case with our NZ import. My current contact at the Conservancy told me there is a geneticist who might be willing to take on a sheep project analyzing the results of our Karakul baseline gene profile and comparing it with other breeds. I am guessing a price of less than five figures for this work. It also requires a commitment from breeders who are willing to do the extra work to build the reference library of genetics for American Karakuls.

Gene Analysis compiled & analyzed becomes part of defining the American Karakul breed. Once the Karakul baseline is complete, then breeders could submit samples to have their sheep Genetically Tested against that, if they are interested in checking their flock.

I am planning on another written survey with questions & issues posed in the two 2024 Newsletters on the topics of New Zealand and Genetic Analysis. **I would like your input!**

Written survey answers are more democratic than a confusing, unexpected Facebook post & breeders influencing Thumbs Up and positive comments. I hope that never happens again.

No Auction Barns!

A long-time breeder suggested that instead of Genetic Testing, I should work on something that would keep Karakuls out of auction barns.

Please know I am working on this, to make it part of the Karakul Shepherds Alliance *Culture* – to keep Karakul sheep out of auction barns. I do know the urgency that accompanies desired closure especially after a shepherd dies.

I am a Registrar, not an Animal Broker and I will not help shepherds sell their sheep, unless they are on their way to an auction. *As long as you have a relationship with KSAR, call me.*

I have one very positive dispersal experience working with Joe Billman and his 6-Winds flock in Arco, Idaho, November 2020. Joe had just sold his farm, then contracted Covid at age 87. I worked hard with an Oregon Navajo-Churro breeder & local families to clean Joe's barn, house & move sheep. It was rewarding work. Joe's Karakuls were the nicest old-pedigree sheep I saw that year. They went to the right homes.

I would be honored to do another dispersal, when asked. I know many shepherds and could probably find people to take potential auction sheep with short notice.

I have found that a family may have loved and profited off Karakuls for years and years, but when they are done, they are done. *I would like to change that mindset.*

Think about the future of your sheep when you are no longer able to take care of them. Please. If not...

...then call me first before going to the auction barn with Karakul sheep.

Your KSAR Registrar

I received a compliment this year when someone said "Deborah, you are very good at Karakul research and history". Thank you! I positively love digging for history on our breed and I actively seek out people who might have answers, and places that might have Karakul documents lying around collecting dust. If something bothers me or doesn't make sense I dig. I keep asking questions until I get answers. The NZ import is a biggie that has bothered me since I started registering Karakuls in 2016. You could call me a Forensic or Investigative Registrar. It's fun research for me, a former Karakul shepherdess, now nerdy librarian.

I would like to remind everyone that I am not getting paid as Registrar. The Alliance barely scrapes by financially since we have never charged memberships. That will change in 2025 as we will start Registry Fees for registration services. The database needs funding and costs are not being covered for the programmer. The database will benefit *all* breeders; each sheep will be able to have ancestors shown as far back as we have records. We will be able to see records of all lambs born to one ewe, all lambs sired by a ram. We will be able to see who has owned the ram or ewe, where they have traveled and left their genetics. A database is an enormous benefit for both sheep and shepherds.

In 2024, with the issues just presented in the two Newsletters, being a Karakul Registrar has not been much fun. There were too many people trying to make things easier for themselves and made it very tough for me to be Registrar. I started registering out of love for Karakul sheep. Being criticized and confronted makes this job absolutely Thankless on top of the lack of salary. Would you like to be treated like that? It is not right.

I'm sorry for the snarky comments. It becomes very difficult when I am being attacked like I've done something wrong. I am attempting to right a wrong, or at least fill in some of the missing gaps in the Karakul Registry flock book.

I'm asking breeders to please back off and stop the confrontations because you think I'm making it difficult to sell Karakuls, not being efficient, or being too efficient. It's all been used against me. It's not my intent to interfere with your sheep marketing. We should be, need to be, a *community of Karakul breeders* working toward our common goal of Karakul promotion.

Trust me, I know I'm not perfect. I do however, believe I have the best blend of education, skills and history with Karakul sheep to be the right person to bring our favorite breed into the 21st century. With database technology to track ancestors, progeny for generations to come will be recorded accurately.

Is this a collaboration, or a competition *winner takes all* with breeders out for themselves?

I invite you to work with me for the good of the Alliance, Registry, and Karakul sheep.

First Year for Registry Fees

\$24 annual Registry Fee in 2025! After our first ten years, the Alliance will finally start charging a fee if you wish to register with KSAR in 2025. The same handful of people have donated extra funds to the Alliance over the past three years. Rather than continue to rely on their shared funds to support the work to register everyone's sheep, the Alliance needs to be more democratic and collect fees.

For now, they will be levied in order to register Karakul sheep. Twenty four dollars is divisible by twelve, which prorates at two dollars per month for NEW 2025 breeders wishing to register.



Donations will continue to be graciously accepted to support the Alliance's work.

I wish the BEST lambing season for EVERY breeder!