



KARAKUL SHEPHERDS ALLIANCE ~ where the flocks gather

Karakul Tails & Tales

Late Summer 2025

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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.

REGISTRY FEE:

Starting our 11th year in 2025 a Registry Fee of \$24 per year was charged for breeders wishing to register their Karakul sheep.

The phrase membership fee was used in the past, but this charge is for the Database. The Alliance is not yet a formal association with By-Laws, therefore we do not charge for Membership. It is a Registry Fee.

Thanks for understanding! 😊

~ Deborah

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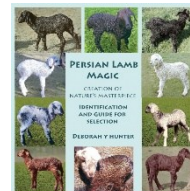
**"Registries are only as good as we breeders make them."**

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

The four photos of Linda and the yurt-ger were taken as snapshots from the PBS videos. See link below.

## The Book is Published!

Welcome! After many requests for a Karakul lamb curls and pattern reference guide, a new book has been written, illustrated and explained from the thousands of photographs I accumulated over years as KSAR Registrar. In this concise guide, more than 160 pictures beautifully clarify the nine traits that create the stunning beauty of Persian lamb, known as Swakara in Africa. Shepherds will be able to embrace the heritage of the only breed in the world that produces lambs of such elegance. Non-shepherds will delight in the extraordinary beauty of Karakul and Swakara lambs. It is an exquisite reference book.



\$40 exclusively through Amazon KDP (Kindle Direct Publishing). Search on *Persian Lamb Magic* or click the link Deborah Y Hunter ©2025 Please write a book review on Amazon after purchase and a read through and let me know what you think. Thanks so much!

Link: [https://www.amazon.com/PERSIAN-MAGIC-Creation-Natures-Masterpiece/dp/B0FYXC25JG/ref=sr\\_1\\_1](https://www.amazon.com/PERSIAN-MAGIC-Creation-Natures-Masterpiece/dp/B0FYXC25JG/ref=sr_1_1)

**This Newsletter is Dedicated to People Worldwide Felting Karakul Wool**

**Linda Johnson-Morke**

**Linda's Big Bucket List Project - Build a Yurt**

Karakul sheep were the featured breed at the Shepherd's Harvest Festival in Minnesota on Mother's Day weekend. The Felt Makers' Guild held a Karakul Challenge on items made with our breed's wool. Linda organized the event, had her Bucket List yurt set up & told its story.



Her yurt was built with pieces from around the world and it came together in two weeks with Linda's passion. A Mongolian family, a yurt company in Canada, 200-pounds of Minnesota fiber, enthusiastic people from the Sustainable Sheep & Fiber Community (SSFC) of Northern Minnesota, and a legacy grant from the Region 2 Arts Council of the Heritage Fund of Minnesota made it happen.

Linda is zealous about felting and especially Mongolian culture, the felt mecca of the world. She has traveled to Mongolia, Norway, Denmark & Russia to learn their felting traditions. Being an engineer, she wondered why some wool does not come together, learning that cultures where felt is important their sheep wool felts well. For decades she has linked wool into felt.

Years ago, Linda had purchased a factory-made Kazak yurt made with laminated wood parts and with it traveled to different sheep festivals. When her family moved Linda had to sell it, as storage was not available. She made an agreement with her spouse that she could use the yurt money to buy Karakul sheep for her own future wool shelter. After sharing this with Alethea Kenney of the SSFC, they collaborated on a grant, The Tapestry Felted Traditional Mongolian Yurt Project, to build one with an educational emphasis.

Linda was artist-in-residence and together with Deborah McQueen Coder they designed the mural-size tapestry artwork. The outside yurt layer would tell the story of



Mongolians' centuries-long tradition of making felt. It is called a ger

(rhymes with hair), but Mongolians are fine with our common word yurt. These shelters have to move to follow their animals, to follow grass in a very arid environment.



**DATABASE WORK**  
*Now that the book is completed, work with the programmer on the Karakul sheep database has resumed. I have been using the Breeders section of the database over a year. An excellent aid for my Registrar work!*

## Contact

Deborah Hunter  
 Librarian, Historian,  
 Registrar & Web  
 Shepherd

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 Alliance

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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.*

## Latest Karakul farm counts recorded by KSAR:

**US = 124, including**

**4 Dairy**

**22 Meat**

**9 Pet flocks (non-breeding)**

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Separate counts:

55 Inactive (since 2018)

4 Canada

9 Foreign

[There are most likely more Canadian flocks, but only 4 known at this time.]

Mongolian Bataa and his family carved and painted the frame with traditional Buddhist symbols and a starry night sky. Groovy Yurts, Inc., from Ontario, Canada sends orders to Bataa and when a load is complete, they are container-shipped. Groovy Yurts then hauls them to locations all over North America. Linda chose blue, symbolizing the connection between sky and earth. Yurts do not make a footprint on the earth, everything is biodegradable - wood, rawhide hinges & horse tail ropes. The first two layers of machine-made felt were included.

Then the outer layer was created. The SSFC laid out beautiful pictures in a wet felt inlay, placed on a thin wool batt. The thick wool back needed to be $\frac{3}{4}$ to 1 inch thick. They started with a full 12 inches of donated fiber including a large percentage of Linda's Karakul wool to increase the felting ability for a stable, solid felt. It was soaped, wet & rolled behind an SUV, unrolled and checked, rewet & rerolled until it was the right size. The soap was rinsed out, given a vinegar bath and hung off a shed roof until dry. Panel after panel by-hand, Linda guided this process.



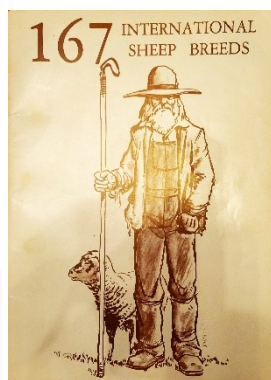
Clockwise around the yurt, the wool art provides educational scenes of Mongolian felt making, the circular sheep-to-shelter stories embodied in the design. This Minnesota project of continuing education, it travels to fairs, fiber festivals, schools & textile centers, a testament to Linda's Bucket List passion come to life.



Smaller felted works, photos courtesy of Linda Johnson-Morke. More pictures in email Newsletter, including the ger. Ask me to forward you a copy.

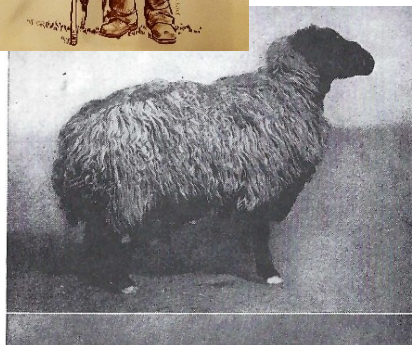
A link to the PBS yurt special in two segments each 27 minutes. The second will cue up after the first. <https://www.tpt.org/common-ground/video/wool-yurt-mural-part-1-3jhufx/?fbclid=IwAR0thr0ccc6Yj0XOSh3mwVro6nIy3-w6YHMUz0Kw00oug-iG06Diz3GVKJk>

~~~~~Education Focus - 1941 Karakul sheep~~~~~



I first became acquainted with Janice Gnatkowski through the large-format book she published entitled **167 International Sheep Breeds**. Seeing my first copy at Julia DeVlieg's, then Joe Billman's upon completion of his sheep dispersal and farm sale, I asked Joe if he would part with it. I was thankful he said yes, because it had been stored well and was in good condition.

In her Introduction, Janice admitted she marveled at all the different sheep breeds developed from the wild Mouflon-Urial. Her family had been trying to secure photos & descriptions of all the world's sheep. When she discovered the Texas Sheep & Goat Raiser Association had published a comprehensive collection in December 1941, she secured the rights to publish it. Adding seven breeds at the back of the book, she reprinted it in 1978 without changing the previous entries.



KARAKUL. Carpet wool; long; imported Central Asia to United States by late Dr. C. C. Young in three shipments, 1908-12-14, only 30 rams and 8-10 ewes; another lot, not Dr. Young's later came to Texas from Germany. Karakuls now 15,000 in United States. Texas Experimental Station says: Hardy, vigorous, long-lived—(Mrs. Nellie Lambie, Jolon, Calif., has ewe "Aloha," 19 years old which has raised 18 lambs, lambing this year, weight 12 $\frac{3}{4}$ pounds, trace directly to Dr. Young's) good mothers, lambs grow rapidly. When lambs are 1-3 days old they are skinned; these skins are known in the fur trade as "Astrakan," "Broadtail." The chief problem is to find a dependable marketing system for skins sold in small lots; the necessity of breeding first class rams is all-important if a higher proportion of lustrous, beautiful, well matched skins is to be secured. Breed unfortunately afflicted with some alleged unprincipled promoters who are alleged to make exorbitant profit claims or are selling crosses as purebreds, etc. Wool, coarse, colored, usually selling at a lower price on account small lots and depending on market demand. Larger lots sometimes sell, grease basis, same price as other wool. Usually lambs sell for less on market on account of lack of blocky mutton conformation; meat excellent. Hereditary peculiarities add to the fascination of breeding Karakuls.

Contacting Janice's son Mel, I received copyright permission to print the Karakul information. Mel majored in Sheep Science at New Mexico State University and was heavily involved with his Mom's Sheep to Shawl competition at the NM State Fair. He combined agriculture with art, making his own loom. Imagine my delight when I discovered their family had Karakuls for 15 years in the 1960s and 1970s time frame. **The Gnatkowski Karakul story to be continued in the next KT&T issue December 2025.**