

## How The Alliance Came To Be

Hello and Greetings!

It was almost 30 years ago, in 1985, when I took over a registry for Karakul sheep from Karen Koch of Ohio. It was called the Empire Karakul Registry, for which the prior Registrar had been Ted Stultz of New York State. I purchased Karen's flock of elegant, long-eared, fine-boned, mostly black Karakuls and had them shipped from Ohio to Eastern Washington State. Also included were many ewes from Ted Stultz's flock. After some research, I found that there had also been a registry called the Bay State Registry, and there had been a few others over the years, but none of them were active.

However, I did start finding folks all over the country, who had small to large flocks of Karakuls, and who were eager to know of each other. I incorporated the few breeders from Karen's project, and pretty much started over with a new organization we called the American Karakul Sheep Registry. It was well received. Many flocks that we located had been isolated so long that it seemed logical to designate them as 'separate bloodlines.' As we began to learn of the origin of each flock, sometimes this was true. But after our two national 'Gatherings' (in 1993 and 1997), the subsequent sheep trading began to blend these lines together. The registering of individual Karakuls helped to distinguish some of the bloodlines and or the breeders' preferences. And it gave the breeders who liked to do competition, the required paperwork for entry. Fourteen years later, in 2000, the project was still a work in progress and we were putting together an Advisory Board due to the growth of the Registry. We had over 50 active breeders/owners and regular interest in the breed from 'new' folks on a regular basis. We had a 'registered population' of over 2000 and yet hundreds more Karakuls in flocks that were isolated or not-yet-discovered. Our obvious next step was to include a Flock Registry concept into our system.

This journey was very rewarding and yet in some ways exhausting. In 2000, for personal reasons, it was necessary that I transfer this whole project to someone else. With great hopes, I assumed that the 'gathering of the Karakuls' into the fold would be continued. Over the subsequent 14 years, this was not accomplished. Apparently the new caretakers prematurely closed the registry to 'new' animals and in doing so lost many Karakuls that did indeed belong. And currently for some reason, the number of active breeder/owners is very few, many actually having quit raising the breed at all. Due to requests, discussions and prodding during the last 4-5 years, from former and current breeders, I have been encouraged to pick up the pieces and proceed to regroup. It is almost, but not quite, like starting over again! Luckily, this time, it has become a group effort. What we have come up with so far I attempt to describe in the following summary:

### Our Goals:

1. Encourage and support the survival and growth of the Karakul Sheep breed in the Americas.
2. Provide an easy way for Breeders and Owners to communicate, share, market, contact each other, and have breed information (both current and historical) available.
3. Provide a means to track and verify bloodlines and issue individual registration certificates.

### Our Solutions So Far...

We have created an organization we call the **Karakul Shepherds Alliance**. Our primary interest is to keep track of flocks of Karakuls. Within this framework we will also establish a data base of individual sheep so that we can provide individual registration certificates on request. Also this will enable us to keep track of bloodlines as much as it is possible.

We have an interactive website/blog that will include historical and current information about the breed, as well as tips for caring for Karakuls. Anyone will be able to post and it will be set up so that comments, suggestions, and/or contributions will be archived by topic for easy access. Members will be able to advertise their sheep, farm and/or farm products. Anyone with an interest in Karakuls is welcome.

Website: **[karakulshepherds.org](http://karakulshepherds.org)**

We will maintain a file for each member. This will contain at least an annual count of the member's flock. Any other particulars such as description of his/her operation, goals, products, photos, projects and comments are most welcome. Keeping such information up-to-date will be the member's responsibility.

In order for us to issue individual registrations, each shepherd will need to keep breeding records for his/her flock, which most of us do anyway. We are investigating and discussing the protocols involved in keeping track of bloodlines when multiple rams are used in flocks, so that the resulting data base of individually registered sheep will continue to be accurate.

Individual registrations will most likely be requested by breeders who do competition and those who sell stock. Although individual registrations are not required, the resulting records will definitely assist our keeping track of the status of our few bloodlines. At some point, breeders will be encouraged to contribute copies of their 'old' certificates so that we may include the information. And the more information we have, the better our data base will be.

As we do not have access to the data base that was started in 1985, we will start with 'what we have', as I did before. We realize, as do you, that Karakul sheep in the US are far from the original bloodlines. Research has acknowledged that the few US imports in the early 1900's were out-crossed to other breeds. But those of us who have been involved with Karakuls are aware that their genetics are very dominant and with careful breeding, the sheep will continue on more true-to-type. This is a good thing, for I believe we all appreciate the amazing qualities of this breed.

I welcome your joining us and I look forward to meeting you ... or re-connecting.

With my best regards,

Julie julia dot devlieg at gmail dot com 509-738-6310

For information about the website, please contact:  
Deborah Hunter info at karakulshepherds dot org

Nov 2014