

# PINE LANE FARM KARAKULS

BY LETTY KLEIN, KALAMAZOO, MICHIGAN.

Karakul sheep have been here at Pine Lane Farm for 34 years. Over the years many prospective shepherds have asked me what breed of sheep they should get. I always suggest that they get a breed that they enjoy looking at.

That's how it all started with me. I saw a ewe in a mixed flock that caught my eye, I loved the way she looked, her haughty carriage, long shaggy fleece, and the way she hid her lamb from us strangers. She was a Karakul I was told. Now after all these years I still love the looks of the Karakul, they are elegant and colorful creatures with a spirited demeanor, reminding me of an Arabian horse or an Afghan hound.

The Karakul has truly changed my life: I soon needed something to do with all the coarse wool that grew so fast that it had to be shorn

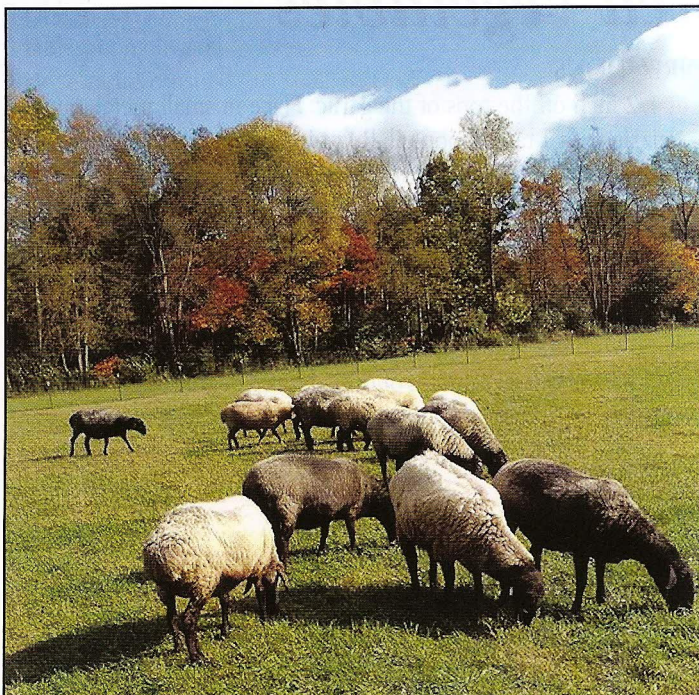
twice a year. So along with my friend in Kentucky, Ann Brown, we developed a method of braiding the roving made from our fleeces to be used in making rugs. In 2006 we decided to document our technique by writing and self-publishing a book, *The Shepherd's Rug*.

The conformation on a Karakul is different from other sheep, the sloping hindquarters ends in a fat tail. The fat in the tail is considered a delicacy by many. The fat in this unique tail is a soft fat, the tail feels like a hot water bottle filled with water rather than the more solid fat found in the body cavity. While it is used in cooking

and as an ingredient in many dishes, it serves the animal as a source of energy in times of need.

The Karakul is a desert sheep, originating in the near-east around the Caspian Sea, they were brought to the USA in the early 1900s for the fur trade, the pelt from a newborn lambs was the prized "Persian Lamb" used in fashionable fur coats of the time, more recently seen on the news where Afghanistan's president Karzai was wearing a silver Persian lamb fez, i.e. hat.

Lambing time is my favorite time. Since Karakuls are non-seasonal breeders, ewes can come in heat whenever they are exposed to a ram. While black is the dominant color, any other color is possible.





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