

TRADITIONAL FLOCKS
and the
Challenges of Tracking Landrace Flocks

Inherent in bringing *new* animals into the records of a Registry's stud books is the establishment of some kind of protocol that would and could assure, as best is possible, the quality standards of breed type. It is a bit of a challenge to set up a simple and effective system. Yet the process becomes especially interesting when medium to large flocks are 'found' that have been maintained for many years without additional genetics. In 1908, Kurt Von Rümker originated the term **landrace**,^[1] which literally translates 'country-breed' from the German *Landrasse*. Landrace has become a term used to classify animals that have been raised or developed genetically isolated for fairly long periods of time. Traditional landrace managed flocks are those with no maintenance of pedigree and frequently with multi-sire mating.

Considering that many of our US Karakul flocks have been isolated for many years, it is easily assumed that such flocks classify as landrace. It is within this concept, Dr. Phil Sponenberg^[2] and staff of the Livestock Conservancy*^[3] have developed some guidelines for rescuing indigenous animal breeds. Together with their ideas and our own experience with Karakul sheep in the US, we have developed a framework in which to establish Karakul breed type, acceptable enough to include *new* ones into our Registry.

Be assured we are aware—there were and are very few 'purebred' Karakuls in the US population, whether already included in a Registry or not. But there are distinct qualities of the breed that define Karakul type—the two unique Central Asian features are the fat-tail and the lustrous, patterned lamb pelt. Fat-tails and lamb pelts are easily characterized; no breed mis-identification is possible.

Registration applications for individual **non**-pedigreed Karakul sheep, of any age, will be reviewed by The Alliance Advisors. For now, The Alliance is requesting photos and possibly a fleece sample and will use the time-tested method of visual observation for breed character evaluation. In considering *new* Karakul flocks that are landrace, each individual sheep will be 'identified' by the flock into which they were born. Therefore, sheep without a registration number will carry their original Source Farm/Flock and Location as their first identifier in the Registry^[2]

Until DNA testing becomes available, the following guidelines are endorsed and supported by Alliance Advisors:

1. Ideally landrace Karakul flocks should be isolated and not raised with other breeds. However, if other breeds are kept, they must be noted and steps taken to avoid inadvertent cross-breeding.
2. Landrace flock recognition is by location of breeder. Karakuls entering the Alliance Registry with one or both unregistered parents will have the sire and/or dam listed by Breeder Name/Farm and City, State.
3. A brief history of the flock, updated annually, will be kept on record by the Karakul Shepherds Alliance. This should include original sources of animals and approximate dates of acquisition. Additions to the flock should be noted as to sex, source and year.
4. If shepherds have divided sheep to maintain different bloodlines, these should be noted and tracked.

Karakul sheep are fundamentally independent and self-sufficient; they almost raise themselves. Low-maintenance and reasonably isolated from other flocks are typical of farm systems that have characterized Karakul breeding for centuries. The Karakul Shepherds Alliance would like to encourage purebred Karakul breeding in traditional settings. If registration is desired, within this framework the Alliance is available as the transition point for individual Karakul sheep progressing from landrace farms and ranches into the Karakul Registry.

Geneticist Phillip Sponenberg of Virginia Tech University describes landrace creation "...when isolation, environmental pressures...and human selection plays a role, but for *end goals* (emphasis added), not as a result of careful selection."^[3] The Livestock Conservancy considers conserving these purebred landrace flocks a very high priority.^[2]

KARAKUL SHEPHERDS ALLIANCE ~ *where the flocks gather*

References:

1. "Landrace." Wikipedia. Accessed May 10, 2015. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Landrace>
2. Sponenberg, D. Phillip. "Landrace Registration Based on Herd/Flock Rather than Individuals." *White Paper*.
3. Sponenberg, D. Phillip, and Donald E. Bixby. *Managing Breeds for a Secure Future: Strategies for Breeders and Breed Associations*. Pittsboro, North Carolina: American Livestock Breeds Conservancy*, 2007. 8–10

*In 2013 the American Livestock Breeds Conservancy (ALBC) shortened its name to The Livestock Conservancy (LC)