

KARAKUL SHEPHERDS ALLIANCE ~ where the flocks gather
2017 US Karakul Sheep Census Data

Census By The Numbers (For explanations and full details please see Report)
65 Karakul shepherd responses
8 non-responders with known flocks (estimated sheep numbers)
73 Karakul breeders reported 89% response rate
16 Facebook group Karakul breeders (estimate)
21 starter flocks sold 2017 (estimate)
37 Karakul shepherds not reached in 2017 census (estimate) *
<i>110 estimated number of US Karakul breeders</i>
65 known Karakul shepherds reported: 236 rams
1479 ewes
1715 total breeding Karakul sheep reported
(see pg 2 bottom* or Details on Sheep Numbers in Report) 239 Karakuls estimated **
<i>1954 estimated number of US Karakul sheep</i>
533 Karakul lambs were reported born Number is low as the census question frequently was unanswered
28 head = average US Karakul flock size
4 = average rams per flock
24 = average ewes per flock
2 to 148 head is range of Karakul flock sizes
Number of Karakuls managed in the top ten largest flocks: 1. 148 2. 118
3. 105 4. 102 5. 85 6. 80 7. 74 8. 71 9. 69 10. 65
12 = highest number of Karakul flocks reporting, state of California; Virginia and Michigan tied at five flocks each
13.83 = average number of years breeding Karakuls
12 new breeders reported in 2017
18 years would be average number of years without 12 new breeders in 2017
Shepherds love Karakul sheep and breed them for decades:
74 = longest number of years breeding Karakuls (3-generation Hindi family, New Mexico)
50 = second longest number of years breeding (2-generation DerStepanian family, Michigan)
6 = number of Karakul shepherds breeding over 3 decades
6 = number of shepherds breeding over 2 decades
15 = number of Karakul shepherds breeding over 10 years
13 = shepherds stated no other breeds; My favorite " <i>Had Katadins but no more, Karakuls or nothing!</i> "
11 = have other sheep, but never crossbred; 8 = have other sheep and Karakul crosses for meat or fleece
6 = number of Landrace isolated flocks found in 2017: (see Breeders page on website) Idaho, Washington, Michigan, California, New Mexico, and Oklahoma

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Census By The Words
Answers to the question <i>What traits do you like or value most in your Karakul sheep?</i> yielded results in seven categories. The figure after the equal sign is the number of times a trait was mentioned in the census data gathered.
Constitution = 35 times; Hardiness, parasite resistance, easy keepers, problem-free
Fleece & Colors = 26 times
Intelligence & Disposition = 22 times; Intelligent and smart sheep, with presence, spirit and character. They are easy to handle, gentle sheep, friendlier than some, and kind. My favorite <i>"I admire Karakul uniqueness—their independence (head strong), tough as nails survival instincts."</i>
Beauty = 20 times; Karakul adults possess beauty and elegance, and then there are the beautiful curly Persian lambs, living art in peas, pipes and curls. My favorite responses <i>"(especially) elegance"</i> and <i>"Karakuls have a noble bearing."</i>
Meat & Fat-tails = 15 times
Lambing & Mothering = 12 times; My favorite <i>"Karakuls suddenly have babies."</i>
Home-Country choice = 3 shepherds; Karakuls were chosen as a favorite from their home countries: Uzbekistan, Lebanon, and Iran.

The Karakul sheep census was conducted by the Alliance from January 2017 through March 2018.

Photos were requested from unknown flocks to confirm Karakul breed type. The Advisors and I rejected two flocks that lead us to believe there was another breed crossed in with the majority of sheep.

Most information was provided on our *Farm & Flock/Census* form. (See **Census** or **Registry** on website)

One to three attempts were made to 73 known Karakul breeders, 65 responded, an 89% response rate.

The 2017 Karakul census was received in the following formats:

- 32 Electronic versions (E-mail, Web form, Text messages, and Internet)
- 14 paper census
- 19 phone calls

An attempt was made to reach Canadian Karakul breeders but none responded. I ran out of time to finish contacting the Facebook Karakul group. With the 2018 lambing season already underway, the decision was made to stop the census on March 31st and start compiling data. I will reach out to both groups soon.

No zoos responded to the census request, but there are at least two known zoos, not just exhibiting but breeding Karakul sheep.

The following estimates were made at the conclusion of the 2017 census:

- * There are perhaps another three to four dozen more Karakul shepherds who remain unknown.
- ** Approximated an additional two to three hundred Karakuls owned/managed by shepherds currently unknown, estimated at a little over 6 sheep per shepherd.

Karakuls are hardy, easy, smart, elegant, beautiful, terrific mothers who produce lambs with curls in living art forms. Karakuls are truly amazing sheep.

