

**STANDARD of PERFECTION for AMERICAN KARAKUL SHEEP
A Guide for Registration**

The Karakul is one of the Asiatic broad-tail types of sheep. It is distinctly angular in build, clean cut, alert and hardy. Differing radically from many other breeds of domesticated American sheep, Karakuls historically have been raised for the production of a valuable fur pelt taken from the very young lamb. We recognize this is not currently their primary use in the US. But in order to keep lamb pelt genetics, the Alliance maintains that in mature Karakuls, the emphasis should continue to be placed on those characteristics indicative of the best quality fur production, not on those qualities that make for improved wool and meat production. The following physical characteristics have been shown to indicate the best possible capabilities as a fur producer and at the same time maintain the desert heritage qualities and survivability; hence the preferred physical description of the Karakul.

SIZE Karakuls are medium-sized sheep. Rams will weigh 150-225 pounds
Ewes will weigh 110-150 pounds

Head

General: Long, narrow, and sharply defined, with an indentation between forehead and nose; convexity over eye and along lower jaw distinctly prominent. Ewes should show a feminine, finely chiseled head. Rams should exhibit a distinctly masculine head with nape of neck strongly developed.

Muzzle: Relatively narrow especially in ewes; lips thin; nostrils narrow, slanting upward and outward.

Nose: Slightly to strongly arched, most prominent in rams.

Eyes: Large with yellow to brown iris; obliquely set. Eye lashes often very long.

Forehead: Narrow; indented and sharply outlined.

Ears: Always pointing forward, slightly downward is preferred, variable ear sizes from very long to elf, one to two inches in length; soft and pliable; longer ears are *usually* U-shape with thinner cartilage, shorter ears V-shape

Poll: Well rounded, narrow and prominent.

Horns: In rams, polled to large, outwardly curved spirals, well rippled. In ewes, generally hornless, scurs, or buds; rarely small semi-developed horns are permissible. Horn buds are short and sturdy attached to the skull; scurs are horny growths not firmly attached.

Neck

General: Long, thin and carried semi-erect; joining top of shoulder with pronounced curve.

Wattles: May be present on one or both sides of neck, a couple inches down from the jaw line.

Body

General: Long and narrow with top line showing indentation in front of and back of shoulder point, highest at loin, sloping angularly at rump and blending into the typical low set broad-tail.

Shoulder: Slantingly set, thinly fleshed, point protruding.

Back: Indented behind shoulder point, sometimes concave and narrow.

Ribs: Very long with little spring; transverse section long oval in shape.

Loin: Side view convex; low at front and rear; strong but not overly broad.

Hips: Wide, prominent.

Rump: Long and sloping, free from excessive fat.

Twist: Shallow; covered by tail.

Thigh: Long, muscular but narrow.

Flank: Deep and flexible.

Chest: Deep and narrow, with large lung capacity.

Brisket: Narrow, coming almost to a V between front legs.

Breast: Undeveloped, blending from brisket into neck.

Scrotum: Well developed and carried high.

Udder: Strong and well developed with two prominent teats.

KARAKUL SHEPHERDS ALLIANCE ~ *where the flocks gather*

STANDARD of PERFECTION continued

Legs

General: Long, straight, with fine to medium bone. Fineness of bone is preferred.

Hooves: Sturdy, with prominent dew claws. Open-toes are common in this desert sheep; as are long, resilient, but strong pasterns.

Tail (Adult)

General: Broad-tail in type, joining the sloping rump with a broad base.

Upper tail: Small to large U-or V-shape; preferred is *large* with much fatty development on each side and around the tail bone; sometimes as wide as the body. Tail size depends on the sheep's condition, but the skin sack should be present whether filled with fat or not.

Lower Tail: A long or short appendage, with little fat, often docked as a lamb; may be long or short, straight, curved, angled, or flipped.

BODY COVERING

Hair

General: The fiber covering the head, ears, and lower legs that is not shorn as part of the fleece should be short, straight to slightly wavy; the ideal is silky and lustrous, but some varieties have coarse or firm hair. Wool on the poll is acceptable, but longer, wavier hair on the poll is preferred.

Color: Black strains often have a definite metallic luster throughout life. Colors variable in other phases; may be white, or any shade of gray, brown, red or roan. Minimal spotting, poll and tail tip, or extensive can occur in conjunction with any color or pattern. Rare Sur coloring, visible only in the lamb and disappearing after a few weeks, displays a dramatic break in the color of each fiber. The most extensive Sur coloring occurs over the entire body, both hair and wool; frequently in large areas on the sides. Each Sur-colored fiber has a darker base and a lighter top half, making the dark pigment appear highlighted or shadowy.

Wool (Fleece)

General: Consists of fiber that is normally shorn from the Karakul.

Texture and Grade: Long-staple wool of a coarse grade, usually open wave although sometimes straight. Shows good natural luster, free from matting, parting easily and cleanly to the skin and falling naturally into numerous locks; has very light grease content. Fleece should be as similar as possible over entire body in density, character and staple. Although single-coated fleeces occur, adult Karakul fleeces usually consist of a finer, shorter undercoat along with a coarser, longer-staple outer coat; the two coats may be different colors. Kemp or extremely coarse, brittle fibers are undesirable and should not be present.

Length and Weight: 12 months growth about 8 to 10 inches; although less common may be anywhere between 5 and 12 inches; weighing 4 to 10 pounds in ewes, more in rams. Recently shorn Karakuls should show high luster and often a definite pattern caused by the new wool growing in several different planes.

Color: Karakuls have a 'Fading Gene' in that black or brown fleeces change to a lighter color, often evident before the first shearing, and gradually lightening each year. Sometimes the outer coat can fade while the undercoat remains dark; occasionally fleeces remain dark throughout life. Spotted lambs can retain pale, faded-spot color patterns, most disappear completely, some remain. Rarer colors like Roan and Sur, fade quickly. White lambs can be white or they can be the result of major spotting. Other colors and patterns are possible and are not discriminated against.

Pelts (Lambs) In a continuing focus to retain lamb pelt genetics, refer to the *Lamb Pelt Assessment* and accompanying *Lamb Barn Worksheet*. For colors follow the *Karakul Color Genetics BASERS* guidelines.

Skin

Texture: Soft, loose, thin and pliable.

Color: Black strains: skin of the muzzle, around the eyes, tongue, and inner mouth are decidedly blue-black to black-gray, somewhat lighter under the hair and fleece, but always of a blackish hue. Other color strains: exhibit brown/tan, pink, or mottled pink-black inside the mouth and on tongue. Dark brown lambs may appear black at birth but will have tan or pink colored eye rims and nose leather.

For additional Registry documents or to obtain papers referenced, please refer to our website or contact: Deborah Hunter, KSAR Registrar, PO Box 1200 Colville, WA 99114