

**KARAKUL BREED STANDARD - BASIC POINTS**  
**A Quick Guide**

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

**BODY CONFORMATION**

**Head** Long, narrow and sharply defined, indented between forehead and nose, with an arched or roman-type profile.

**Ears** May be U- or V-shape, most often pointing forward, slightly downward and variable in size, ranging from very long to very short; elf ears may be one inch in length.

**Horns** In rams, hornless to large, outwardly curved spirals

In ewes, usually hornless, scurs or buds; small semi-developed horns are permissible

**Neck and Chest** May have wattles high on neck. The neck is long, thin and carried semi-erect, joining top of shoulder with a pronounced curve. The chest is deep and narrow, coming almost to a V between front legs.

**Body** 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.

**Legs** Long, straight, with fine to medium bone. Fineness of bone is preferred.

**Tail** Small to very large U- or V-shape. Preferred is *large* with much fatty development on each side and around tail bone. If lower tail appendage is undocked, it may be long or short, straight, curved, angled, or flipped.

**Fleece** Long-staple wool of a coarse grade, should fall into locks of medium density, very high yielding (low grease). Usually double-coated, although single-coated occurs; if double, the two coats may be a different color. Any color is acceptable as long as it shows good natural luster.

**CHARACTERISTICS INDICATING INFERIORITY:**

- Body square and blocky, distinctly suggestive of meat-sheep conformation
- Body short and close coupled
- Heavy bone
- Ears set semi-erect or erect
- Fleece distinctly woolly in character
- Tail showing little or no fat-tail development
- Very short head, or excessively large and coarse head

**UNDESIRABLE CHARACTERISTICS:**

- Fleece very coarse, dull, harsh, or containing kemp
- Tail docking and length left to breeder's discretion, but the fat-tail should never be *completely* docked.

**NOTES ON SHOWING**

- Karakuls may show in Karakul classes, in Primitive or Classic multi-breed sheep classes, or in Natural Colored wool classes.
- Belly trimming is acceptable and often necessary for the animal's comfort, since they are usually in full fleece during warm weather for shows.
- Exhibitor must present sheep with enough wool to allow judge to assess quality and consistency of fleece.
- Presenting animals rinsed or un-rinsed is the individual's preference. However, washing and brushing can distort the natural lock formation resulting in a 'processed', rather than an 'unprocessed or raw' fleece.
- This is a recommendation *neither for or against* washing and brushing. Presentation should be the decision of the individual Karakul shepherds who are showing, and ultimately the decision of the show ring judges.

For additional information on Karakuls, please contact the Karakul Shepherds Alliance,  
**[karakulshepherds.org](http://karakulshepherds.org)** or your local breeder.