

BREEDING KARAKUL SHEEP

Industry Only Six Years Old in the United States, but Attracting Much Interest—
Difficulties of Securing Stock—Six Classes of Karakul Recognized
in Asia, All Owing Their Origin and Color to the Small,
Black Danadar, Now Almost Extinct.

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THE Karakul sheep industry is one of the most recent enterprises in live stock in the United States, but few branches of this department of breeding are attracting more attention today. I propose, therefore, to give in this paper a history of the introduction of Karakul sheep into North America, an account of the present status of the industry, and my belief as to the origin of the six classes which, in Central Asia, are recognized as making up the breeds known to the Russians as Karakul and to the Bokharans as Arabi.

The industry in the United States dates back only to 1908, when a letter of introduction, from President Roosevelt to the United States Ambassador at St. Petersburg enabled me to interest his excellency A. S. Yermaloff, ex-minister of agriculture of the Russian empire, and now a life member of his majesty's council. Through his influence I secured the cooperation of the Poltava Agricultural Society, which obtained for me fifteen head of Karakuls in Bokhara.¹

The laws of the Khanate of Bokhara prohibit the exportation of these valuable fur bearing animals by foreigners, but a few flocks have been gotten out by certain Russian societies, who have received the support of the Russian Foreign and Agricultural Departments. Although Bokhara is a quasi-dependency of Russia, the czar does not interfere in the international

administration of the emir's empire, which has an absolute monopoly of the Persian lamb and Astrakhan fur industry.

The Russian government also prohibits the importation of Karakul sheep, and as the United States government generally does not permit the importation of live stock from Asia we have found it an almost impossible task to start the industry on this continent, although our efforts extend over a period of fifteen years.

THE FIRST IMPORTATION.

In the beginning of 1909, five rams and ten ewes arrived in New York on a Saturday boat, which was scheduled to return on Monday, and had it not been for the prompt intercession of the Hon. J. A. Tawney, whom we happened to reach at the last moment, and who secured the cooperation of the federal authorities at Washington, my Karakuls would have been slaughtered or returned on the same boat.

The sheep were in quarantine for a long time, and for three months were kept in an absolutely dark barn, in order to lower their power of resistance, and to make it possible to trace in the blood the parasite of surra. When flash light photographs reached us, showing the animals to be in a very emaciated condition, we at once applied to Mr. Roosevelt, who ordered their release.

I returned in May last from a year's

¹Those interested may refer to the American Breeders' Magazine (third quarter, 1912), Literary Digest (September 30, 1911), and the New York Herald (September 10, 1911 and April 20, 1913) for further details about my importations.