

**DOMINION DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE.
LIVE STOCK BRANCH.**

H. S. ARKELL
Live Stock Commissioner.

T. REG. ARKELL,
Chief, Sheep and Goat Division.

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KARAKULE SHEEP AND PERSIAN LAMB FUR PRODUCTION.

By **G. ERLE O'BRIEN.**

In 1900 the first importation of Karakule sheep was brought into America, with the object of producing on this side of the water, what is known to the trade as Persian lamb, Broadtail and Astrakhan furs. This first importation consisted of fifteen head, ten ewes and five rams. Other importations to the United States followed in 1913 and 1914, with the result that during this time some fifty-four Karakules were imported, the majority of which were rams, the purpose being to mate these rams with the domestic white sheep. It was from these importations to the United States that the first Karakule sheep to arrive in Canada were obtained, when in the latter part of 1913 flocks were established in Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island. The following year other importations were made and several flocks were established in Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and Alberta. At the present time there are between five and six hundred grade Karakules in Canada produced by crossing Karakule rams with our native long-wool breeds of sheep, and approximately one hundred rams and ewes either imported or descended from imported stock.

Persian lamb fur is the primary marketable product from Karakule sheep. Both in Canada and the United States there is a keen demand for this fur, which is being filled mostly from Asiatic countries. Though the production of these same Karakule sheep. This Persian lamb is obtained by killing the young Karakule lamb when only a few days old; at this age the skin is very black and tightly curled, while as the lamb becomes older the curl rapidly loosens. The qualities determining the value of a skin are lightness and size of curl, the lustre and size of the skin. Another grade of fur, the product of the Karakule, is Broadtail or Baby Lamb, the skin of prematurely born lambs, when these skins are strong and of good size they usually possess more lustre and a longer closer curl than do the other grades. Astrakhan fur is the dressed and dyed skins of young Karakule lambs which do not possess the regular tight curl, but rather loose and very open. Astrakhan is also frequently the result of late killing. These three classes of fur, Persian lamb, Broadtail, and Astrakhan, are invariably black when taken from the young Karakule; there is, however, a fourth grade which is usually included with the above by the fur trade, namely, Krimmer fur. This class is very similar to the Astrakhan, except that it is grey and is dressed in its natural state. It is said to be the product of the Karakule produced mainly in the Crimean Peninsula. So far as is known none of this class of fur has been produced by the Karakules in Canada.

The Origin of the Karakule.

The different authorities seem to be at variance regarding the origin of Karakule sheep; even those who have personally visited Bokhara, in Russian Turkestan, the native home of the Karakule. Like other domesticated animals their development has been spread over many centuries, the beginning of the breeding combinations, which made them what they are now, are simply not known. The natives of Bokhara apparently know absolutely nothing about their origin, while the Russian authorities