INTRODUCTION

The Karakul sheep is believed to be the oldest domestic sheep breed in the world. Karakul sheep was introduced and imported into Namibia during 1907 when the first consignment of seven ewes, two rams and three lambs, bred in Bukhara (Uzbekistan), were imported from Germany. In the course of time this sheep made a decisive contribution to the development of the country, and because of its very nature it is perhaps predestinated to play that important role in the small stock industry once again.

THE CHANGE : 1907 - 1998

Namibia’s Researchers, Extensionists and farmers managed to change the imported Karakul into a very outstanding and most amazing sheep with pelt qualities found only in Namibia and the adjacent RSA. It was changed from a long hair, curly pelt into a short hair pelt with a very exceptional pattern and hair texture.

1907

RESEARCH
EXTENSION
FARMERS

1998

The success of the Karakul in the past can be seen in the infrastructure that had been developed on the farms during the years when the industry was booming, especially in the southern and western areas of Namibia. This was also the time when the black karakul pelt was called the “Black Diamond” of Namibia. The total income during 1976 from approximately 4 million karakul sheep (3 million pelts) was N$50.2 million for example.
Fig. 1 shows a remarkable drop in pelt numbers from 1980, mainly due to the low pelt and high mutton prices. From 1994 the market recovered slowly but without any effect on the number of pelts produced. The present price (June, 1998) of N$162.51, together with the lower mutton prices, can be the turning point for the low number of pelts marketed during the last five years. A higher number of pelts in the market will have a positive effect on the natural resources. It may also affect the mutton price since that supply should drop due to the swing to pelt production.

**BREED ADVANTAGES**

- Highly adaptive in low rainfall areas – ewes do not have to raise lambs during drought periods, since lambs are slaughtered for pelt production.
- Non-perishable product. Pelts can be stored for long periods.
- Source of high quality by-products (meat, wool, milk, leather and tallow).
- Strong herd instinct makes it easy to herd.
- Diversification within the breed (meat, pelt and wool).
- Pelts are easy to market (no transporting of animals).
- No losses due to mortality in lambs (slaughtered at day old age).
- Day old lamb carcasses are a good supply of meat.

**THE PRODUCT**

One of Namibia's most beautiful ladies, in Namibia's most elegant garments.

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