Eighth grader launches ‘squealing’ fun business.

After a long day of school and basketball practice, Patrick Peterson returns home and pulls on rubber boots to care for his babies.

All 13 of them.

The Gothenburg eighth grader raises Yorkshire pigs he sells to other 4-H’ers and crossbred pigs as a commercial venture.

“I like pigs,” Patrick announces.

Perhaps some of his fondness for the creatures is because he’s grown up with them. His father, uncle and grandfather have been in the business for many years and now feed pigs for a large swine producer from Sumner.

“I’ve always been in a pig barn,” Patrick said.

Patrick bought Charlene, a white purebred Yorkshire, last April when he was 12 and showed her in 4-H last summer.

“They’re known as good mothers and I wanted that in other sows,” he said.

Patrick then bred Charlene, through artificial insemination.

On Valentine's Day, Charlene delivered her first litter of 13 piglets.

Patrick said the youngsters were put on a pellet feed that contains dried milk to help wean them from their mother and to help in the transition of their digestive system to solid foods.

Weaning Charlene's piglets will occur later this week, he said.

Some of the pigs from Charlene's litters have and will be sold along with other commercial crossbred pigs that Patrick and his younger brother, Evan, are raising to help other 4-H'ers and FFA'ers to learn about and show swine.

Karen Peterson, Patrick's mother, said the project is designed to help other kids buy pigs at a reasonable price.

Patrick said pigs are funny, just like cats and dogs and even humans.

"They each have their own personality, even if they have 12 other brother and sisters," he said.

Another interesting fact Patrick shared is that pigs are smart.

And their snouts are strong so they can lift almost anything, even posts from the ground.

Pigs are also inventive and curious, Karen said.

Raising them involves a lot of work, Patrick said, such as knowing when to breed the sows, the breeding process, keeping mothers from biting or squashing their babies, feeding and cleaning up after them and other tasks such as notching the ears of newborns for identification purposes.

Buying feed, sheds, crates and other equipment also involves time and energy, he said.

The best part about pig raising, Patrick said, is seeing the babies for the first time.

Karen Peterson, Patrick's mother, said newborns are adorable.

"And showing pigs is fun," Karen said. "But they have a purpose."

"To put food on the table," Patrick replied.

Although Patrick also shows cattle, pigs are his favorite.

"They're less hassle and you don't have to do as much during show time," he said.

Patrick is also a junior leader for the Tail Twisters 4-H Club, an organization co-founded by his grandfather, Larry Peterson.

Through the club, he shows other swine enthusiasts how to work with their animals, herd them and how to get them ready for show.

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