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Reclaiming Profitability: Farming Smarter in

Albert Lea, MN

ProfitPro[®]AG

Speaker Profile: Jolene Carlson

What if nutrient-dense foods could heal people, strengthen communities, and restore the land — all while improving the bottom line? According to Lieutenant Colonel Jolene Carlson, sustainable farmer and Minnesota National Guard member from Cokato, MN, this isn't a theory. It's what happens when you farm smarter and let soil health drive your decisions.

Jolene owns and operates a regenerative hobby farm with her family, raising heritage turkeys and chickens, bees, garlic, hazelnuts, fruit trees, and kunekune pigs. She's passionate about showing growers how thoughtful, soil-first management can reduce inputs, increase resilience, and create nutrient-dense food that supports human health.

"I love ProfitProAG's philosophy of farming the controllables and farming nature's way," Jolene says. "Observation and flexibility are key. I pay attention to what the land and soil need — the micro-climate, the ecosystem — and adjust so everything can thrive."

The Carlson family is restoring 20 acres of cropland to prairie, integrating edible and medicinal perennials, and practicing silvopasture to combine trees, livestock, and forage in a profitable, multifunctional system. Jolene embraces the idea that even "unwanted" plants often have nutritional or medicinal value. "Everything has a purpose — except maybe buckthorn!" she jokes.

A former high school science teacher with master's degrees in environmental sciences and functional medicine, Jolene brings a rare blend of agronomy, ecology, and human health expertise. She serves on the Minnesota Soil Health Coalition Board and works full-time as the Minnesota National Guard's holistic health and fitness director.

"The more we understand what the land is telling us — the signs and symptoms of use or abuse — the better we can address root causes," she says. "Healthy land leads to healthy food, healthy people, and healthier communities."

During ProfitProAG's 2026 Winter Conference, Jolene will share a message of hope and practical strategy centered on reclaiming profitability by farming smarter in 2026, guided by four key principles:

- Everything is connected — soil health, gut health, and human health.
- Chronic illness signals unhealthy systems, both in people and in agriculture.
- Healthy agricultural systems improve overall human health and reduce long-term costs.
- There is always a way forward — profitability and stewardship can grow together.

