

# 2025 WINTER CONFERENCE SPEAKER PROFILE JOLENE CARLSON

Jolene Carlson, sustainable farmer, Minnesota National Guard member, Cokato, MN.

What if nutrient-dense foods could heal people and the environment? It's not only possible but a reality when you focus on soil health and farm nature's way.

Just ask Lieutenant Colonel Jolene Carlson, who owns and operates a sustainable hobby farm in Cokato, Minnesota, and has served as a traditional Guardsmen with the Minnesota National Guard for 19 years. She's passionate about educating people about the importance of nutrient-dense foods and embracing regenerative Ag practices that create an environment for healthy soils, crops, livestock and people.



"I love ProfitProAG's philosophy of farming the controllables and farming nature's way," says Jolene, who works full-time for the Minnesota National Guard as the holistic health and fitness director. "Observation and flexibility are key. I try to pay attention to what the land and soil need, as well as the micro-climate/ecosystem of my land to see what it needs to thrive."

Jolene and her family raise heritage turkeys and chickens, bees, garlic, hazelnuts, fruit trees and kunekune pigs, a small breed of domestic swine whose heritage is connected with the Māori, the indigenous people of New Zealand. Kunekune pigs (pronounced KOO-nee KOO-nee) produce more fat than other breeds and are herbivores that can consume a wide variety of vegetation, including grass, hay, grains, and vegetables.

The Carlson family is also restoring 20 acres of cropland to prairie, with a focus on edible and medicinal perennials. "While we might not want certain plants that the land is producing, I believe everything has a purpose—except maybe buckthorn!" Jolene says. "I try to utilize what is growing, including dandelions, nettle, creeping charlie (ground ivy) and more. All of those are extremely beneficial for nutrition and/or medicine."

As they manage their acres, Jolene and her family are focusing on silvopasture—the integration of trees and grazing livestock on the same land. These systems are intensively managed for both forest products and forage.

**"Tiny differences in management can lead to overwhelming differences in output and profitability."**

*- Dr. Jim Ladlie*

The primary practices on my land are diversity, covering the ground, and restoring soil health,” says Jolene, who serves on the Minnesota Soil Health Coalition Board. “We’ve raised Scottish Highland cattle in the past, and we want to reintroduce this heritage breed on the silvopasture.”

Jolene, who spent 20 years as a high school science teacher, has a master’s degree in education in environmental and natural sciences, as well as a master’s degree in human nutrition and functional medicine. “The more we can understand what the land is trying to tell us, especially signs and symptoms of use and abuse, the more we can address the root cause of how to best support the land and adapt to what it needs,” says Jolene, a state-licensed nutritionist who has worked with clients for the past five years.

Jolene and her husband, who serves in the Air National Guard, enjoy teaching their four children that everything in nature is connected and has a purpose. During ProfitProAG’s 2025 Winter Conference, Jolene will share a message of hope guided by four key points:

1. Everything is connected, including soil health, gut health and human health.
2. Chronic illness is a sign/symptom of unhealthy systems.
3. Healthy Ag systems improve overall human health.
4. There is always a way forward.