Josh Nelson didn’t grow up on a farm, but he’s always had a love for the land. It’s a bit ironic for a man who spends his working hours flying military aircraft. Nelson is a Captain in the West Virginia Air National Guard stationed at 130th Airlift Wing in Charleston. He and his wife Brittany were hobby farmers until Josh had an epiphany flying several thousand feet over the Middle East.

“I was flying a mission in Northern Iraq, in Kurdish territory. I remember looking down at the ground. These Kurdish farmers were out there on their tractors, plowing their fields in the middle of a war zone, and I was jealous of them,” explained Josh. “We have a lot of iron in the fire, but they all work together. That’s the thing about regenerative agriculture or polyculture. We believe that single use on a particular piece of land is not the best thing for the soil. That’s what everything revolves around – soil health. If you take care of the soil, it will take care of you,” stressed Josh. “We mob graze our cattle. They’re packed tight in a quarter acre paddock. They’re moved daily so they’re not in their own manure. The grass stays in an explosive growth phase. After we move the cows out, three to four days later we bring in the chickens behind them. That’s when the fly larva cycle happens. They’ll go through and scratch the fly larva out of the cow patties and spread that manure for us. The chickens get free food and it keeps the flies off the cows for us.”

The farm keeps the Nelsons busy, but that didn’t stop them from adding another agriculture enterprise - a farm store in Ripley called Farm House Naturals.

“Farm House Naturals is all about healthy products. We started out selling CBD, but I quickly learned one product wasn’t going to carry the store,” explained Josh. “We now sell natural, local-made soaps, coffees ground here in West Virginia and fresh eggs. Now we’re hosting grass to grill dinners at the Farm House on Saturdays.”

With all that going on, Josh was deployed back to the Middle East in late February. He hopes it’s a short stay, only two to three months. In the meantime, his father and business partners are helping Brittany keep up with work on the farm.

“Our time in the military has been incredible. It’s opened a lot of opportunities for us. It gave me the opportunity to get a graduate degree. It’s provided a good living for us. I thank the taxpayer for the opportunity to serve them,” said Josh.

The couple have big plans once Josh returns from his latest deployment.

“We want to change the food system. We want to make it so people all over the place can go to a farm store where there are six or eight local farms supplying that store. People can get to know their farmer. That’s a huge thing for us. We want people to know their farmer just like they know their doctor or mechanic or lawyer. You need those people a couple times every year. You need your farmer every day!”