

WWOOF

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Update from WWOOF Headquarters

Well, here it is, the new edition of the WWOOF book is finally complete. It is super up-to-date as every host has specifically written to us to renew membership. There will be yet another update early next year so if there are any changes you want to make, send them in to us.

With all the updates came lots of neat feedback from hosts so the rest of this update is devoted to summarising this.

♦ The last update from us outlined the issue of what it means to be 'organic' and a WWOOF host. Essentially hosts feel that WWOOF is "WWOOrganic!" i.e. it is for organic farms only. Having said this there was a general agreement that the organic rules should be kept simple (only a few hosts thought the Bio-Gro standards were appropriate). I hope the following statement suits the majority of hosts feelings on the matter. In the future something like this could be adopted as WWOOF's organic policy:

"Hosts should be able to provide WWOOFers with a worthwhile and educational experience in organic techniques".

This is an open statement that caters for a wide range of organic properties. Hosts felt it would be good to have someone visit prospective hosts to assess their suitability.

At this stage we will continue to encourage WWOOFers to provide feedback to us and follow up problems when necessary.

Basically ALL WWOOF hosts should practice organic farming and WWOOFers should never be involved with any non-organic farming. Another suggestion from hosts was that a truly organic WWOOF book should attract travellers who are genuinely interested in learning organic farming. To help this attraction we are starting to provide overseas organisations who run organic courses with information about WWOOF so that their students can consider some practical work in NZ.

♦ The hosts who are not able to provide an experience in organic farming but still wish to participate in the cultural exchange are

able to go into a separate category. This category will have its own title to distinguish it from WWOOF. If you feel that you are more suited to this list can you please drop us a line to let us know. This will make our job much easier.

Some hosts have traditionally had less WWOOFers than in other areas.

Reasons? Maybe because of the high concentration of hosts and comparatively less travellers going to this region. Hosts in other regions report they are getting a number of calls each week. If all hosts can continue to let us know in their correspondence about the availability of WWOOFers this will allow us to adjust promotion to suit (WWOOF has never done any specific advertising in the past, just word of mouth and magazine articles etc.).

♦ Hosts have been inconvenienced by WWOOFers who set a date to come and stay but don't turn up. Some instructions to WWOOFers about not doing this have been included with the WWOOF book.

♦ A host suggested that WWOOFers provide positive ID (passport no. and home address) when they arrive as a matter of routine. At this stage we will be changing the membership form to include this info for our records. You could ask your new guest to record their ID in a visitors book when they arrive at your place as well.

Please remember, most often, hosts have problems with their guest when they are not actually a member of WWOOF i.e. ask them on the phone if they have joined. If not, don't accept them!

♦ A WWOOFer said recently that the hosts she contacted wouldn't take her because she wasn't suited to the work that they had in mind. The WWOOFer obviously felt this attitude was sexist and would like hosts to be more balanced in their judgements.

♦ The IRD has taken some interest in hosts who want to claim for WWOOF expenses. This is a large issue for WWOOF. Like it or not, WWOOFers can not 'work' for their food and accommodation. To do this they

need a work permit and an IRD number. Instead WWOOFers are your guests and help out with day-to-day chores as any guest would. You are not able to claim expenses associated with WWOOFers as they are not 'workers', nor are they paying guests. Because of these 'complications' it may become beneficial to drop the term "workers" from WWOOF. WWOOF has become a word in itself - maybe it will be in the next Oxford Dictionary. Your WWOOF Book has 'Willing Workers On Organic Farms' replaced with "Living and Learning... the organic way". Is this suitable? Any other suggestions?

♦ To make the WWOOF book more attractive and to personalise your listing, you can now include with your update a simple sketch that characterises your place. It may be a logo or picture of your house, farm etc. Include \$5 for this service. We'll scan it, size it and put it next to your listing.

♦ Demand from New Zealanders and travellers has meant that we have now established the service "HOME AWAY FROM HOME". HOME AWAY FROM HOME is designed to suit New Zealand hosts who wish to have a cultural exchange but find it better to charge a fee to cover food and accommodation. It is aimed at the budget travellers and language school students. Hosts don't need fancy accommodation - as long as its clean and tidy. It should provide extra pocket money - especially if you can grow food cheaply! If WWOOF hosts choose to belong to both WWOOF and HOME AWAY FROM HOME then hosts should find that the two services compliment each other. The enclosed pamphlet has more details.

That's it for now,

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