



# Update from Wwoof Headquarters

Wwoof NZ Newsletter July 2001

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## “Behold this compost! Behold it well!”

Words of exclamation from Walt Whitman while he marvelled at what life springs forth from rotten material. It’s good to have such inspiration during the cold months of winter! Speaking of inspiration, what marvellous campaigning has/is being done on the GE front. Consumers have a growing awareness of the risks of GE and are avoiding GE products. Industries are responding to this campaign also (New Zealand Dairy Foods have recently said their products are GE Free).

## EcoNation by 2020 Aotearoa

One of the first major steps toward becoming an organic country is to declare ourselves GE free. The government is due to hear recommendations from the Royal Commission on GM on 27th July. This means now is a good time to make sure the government knows how you feel. One efficient way to do this is by contributing to the GE Free NZ postcard campaign. This series of 5 postcards to be sent to 5 key MPs says to:

- + *ban all field trials and commercial releases of genetically engineered organisms into the environment*
- + *keep GE-foods out of the country*
- + *restrict genetic engineering to contained laboratories.*

You can print the cards for free at  
<http://nzgefree.nelson.org.nz>

Otherwise sets of 5 can be ordered by writing to NZ GE-Free Postcards, PO Box 1, Paekakariki. The cards are ‘free-of-charge’ but a donation of about \$5 would help with printing and postage.

We hope all is well with your Wwoofing experiences. To help improve the service that Wwoof offers we hope you will be able to provide some helpful feedback on the topics outlined below. You can either do this direct to us or via the public notice board at [www.wwoof.co.nz/notices.html](http://www.wwoof.co.nz/notices.html)

### Wwoof Book on the Internet?

While the internet is a relatively new technology and needs to be used appropriately, allowing Wwoof members access to the book via the internet does seem to offer advantages to Wwoofers and hosts:

#### Updates

Hosts can send in their updates at any time. This al-

lows hosts to write a listing in the spring to describe their spring projects, and then change it in late summer to describe what they are doing at that time. This makes hosts details much more dynamic and accurate.

#### Searching

One unique benefit of the on-line book is that Wwoofers can search the 610 hosts for a topic they are interested in. For example they could list those hosts who mention Bio-Gro, permaculture, solar power, vegetarian, music or whatever (by the way, 106 hosts mention permaculture while only one mentions onions)! Hopefully this will help to efficiently match Wwoofer’s and Host’s interests.

#### Supply and Demand

It has always been a problem: A Wwoofer phones to say “I’ve phoned 15 farms and no one can take me”. On the same day a host will ring and say “I haven’t had many calls lately”. Solution? Have a facility whereby hosts who are waiting for Wwoofers can go to the web site and put their name on a ‘hot list’. Wwoofers can then read this list and make the connection with the host.

#### Mini Website for Hosts

It is possible to include a logo and also photographs with the listing. This essentially develops the listing into a mini website about the farm which is much more personal than plain text. Wwoofers would find this useful when looking for their next host to contact. So if hosts have some photos they would like to include with their listing please send them in. They could be photos of the farm, your Wwoofers and even yourself!

#### Security

Wwoofers can only obtain access to your personal contacts details using their member’s password. However no system is completely secure so hosts must ensure they **continue to ask their Wwoofers to sign in (name, address, membership number etc.) to a guest book when they arrive**. Remember Wwoofers will still have a Wwoof Book which contains their proof of membership. If Wwoofers know that all hosts accept genuine members only, then people are less likely to abuse the system. It’s reasonable to assume that if someone has taken a free ride by getting host’s contact details for free, they may also expect a free ride when staying with them!

Please note that the web site is an additional service that is offered to members i.e. it wont mean total automation at all. We will continue to deal personally with

problems and concerns that arise, produce the Wwoof Handbook for members, and every application for Wwoof Membership will continue to be personally processed. These jobs will not be replaced with computers or 'the internet'. Beware of web organisations that don't have a human side i.e. no names, addresses, phone numbers in order to deal with someone personally! There will be no charge for the internet services.

### Wwoofing With Kids

A lot of Wwoofers this year have been asking if hosts can take families/kids. Unfortunately we haven't been able to give them any definite answers so would like to ask you to indicate if you can or can not take Wwoofers with kids. This may depend on the amount of accommodation at your place or maybe if you yourself have children.

### Percentage of Organic Food

The idea of indicating to Wwoofers how much of the food you eat is organic was outlined in the previous newsletter. While most hosts provide organic food where possible, it would be good to give an indication in your listing. There have been a few reports of Wwoofers being fed white bread and plastic



cheese on a regular basis, and expected to give good days work.

### Wwoofer's Accommodation

Suzanne Bonneman (currently interviewing Wwoofers for a research project) has had interesting feedback about Wwoofer's accommodation. It seems that there are a few hosts expecting Wwoofers to sleep in cold, damp, mouldy caravans, half-completed huts etc. While this could be put down to



'part of the experience', if it is too uncomfortable then the Wwoofers will not bother Wwoofing any more (and they will advise their friends not to Wwoof in NZ either).

One Wwoofer wrote: *"I had to stay in a caravan with two other people that I did not know, there was no privacy, and when it rained it leaked onto my bed. Another place had woolshed accommodation and a long drop far from the house. The hosts had very strong beliefs. I think it should be mentioned in the description"*!

Hosts don't need fancy 3 course meals, spa pools and king size feather beds, but there does need to be a minimum standard for all hosts: Clean and warm accommodation and enough nourishing food to set up your Wwoofer for a good mornings work on the farm!

### Bouquets for Hosts

The following excerpt is from a Wwoofer's letter:

*"The farm where I stay at the moment I enjoy so much. I've never been to a more hospitable, friendly and funny place like this dairy farm here. I felt welcome and at home even on the first day"*.



As a way of recognising the positive influence hosts provide to the Wwoof Organisation, we would like to select a couple of the hosts to receive a gift. They are hosts whose Wwoofers have written in praise of them. This will be done on a regular basis, with the first two hosts being:

Rob and Barbara Knowles

Stu Davidson

They will each receive a catalogue and \$30 Eco Store gift voucher.

Both these places made their Wwoofers feel like part of the family, gave them good food and great experiences. Their Wwoofers felt comfortable and safe, learnt a lot and where more than happy to help out on the property .

So thanks to all hosts who have given your Wwoofers so much and contributed to the great reputation Wwoof and New Zealanders in general have around the world!

### Seed Catalogue Included

Please find a complementary copy of the seed catalogue enclosed.

If you have information that is relevant to Wwoof hosts then it can be included for free with mail-outs.

### Interested in a French Farm Exchange?



Jill Christie and her companion John would like to do an exchange with their small-holding in Civray, Loire Valley, France. John and Jill have a life-long experience in farming and organics and are wanting to exchange in either Sep/Oct 2001 or April/May 2002.

Their small holding has chooks and a vege garden. In the local area you can visit vineyards and local arts and crafts and dine in 'fermes auberges', offering local cheeses and fresh vegetables from 'The Garden of France'.

Contact .Jill Christy, "Civray", La Celle Guenand, Le Grand Pressigny, 37350 France.

Phone 0033 2 4794920

# Host's Return Slip

✓ or ✗

We wish to remain as Wwoof Hosts for the upcoming 2001/2002 year.

We enclose our \$20 membership fee

We are able to accommodate Wwoofers with children

We wish to be included in the on-line Wwoof Book

We enclose photos (up to 3) to include with our on-line listing

On average, we would eat approximately 25% 50% 75% 100% organic food (circle the closest).

Please return in the envelope provided (no stamp needed).

Please return this as soon as you can (but before the 6th of August).

Thank you.



Additional Comments / Updates: