

Risk Assessment: Billhook and Mallet

Venue	Rewilding Adventure Site, Dunsdale	Completed by:	Morgan Lax	Date:	14th April 2025	Review Date:	14th April 2027
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Description of site / activity / tools:

Bill hooks and mallets are mainly used within Forest School and bushcraft for splitting/cleaving wood through the application of force. At times a billhook may be solely used for stripping branches; alternatively a mallet may be used as a hammer for tent pegs. The bill hook and mallet may be used in a pair or singularly according to age and ability. This decision rests with the instructor according to the situation.

	Hazard	Harm	People at Risk	Existing Control Measure	Likelihood (1-3)	Severity (1-3)	Rating LxS (1-9)	New Control Measure Who? When?	Comments
1.	Hitting own hand (Single use)	Crush/impact injuries	Self	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tool talk • Demonstrate safe use • Ensure stable platform for work piece • Single hits • Aim to strike mid blade whilst holding handle • Billhook and Mallet at 90° 	1	2	3		Gloves will be available to wear, however, given the nature of the action involved will offer little protection.
2.	Hitting helper's hand	Crush/impact injuries	Assistant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tool talk • Demonstrate safe use • Log in the middle of the blade • Ensure stable platform for work piece • Single hits • Aim to strike mid blade whilst assistant holds handle/head of blade • Eye contact and communication between user and assistant (Billhook holder is <i>in charge</i>) • Billhook and Mallet at 90° 	1	2	3		See above. Gloves available, but are unlikely to be effective against the mechanism of injury.
3.	Cut by blade during use/ walking	Cut	All	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tool talk • Demonstrate safe use • Used one arm and a tool from others • Carried by handle blade down and to rear 	1	1	2	Consider purchasing blade covers if the blades are sharpened	The billhooks which are used have a blade yet it is not sharpened to a cutting edge where is likely to cut; the cutting/slitting action comes from the force used against the blade
4.	Striking hand during stripping	Cut/impact injury	All	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tool talk • Demonstrate safe use • Used one arm and a tool from others • Wear gloves when using billhook to strip • Holding hand to be <i>up-stream</i> of blade when 	2	1	3		

				stripping					
5.	Sharpening	Cutting self	User	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wear gloves when sharpening Staff to sharpen 	1	2	3		
6.	Kneeling on blade	Cutting knee	All	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tool talk Return to bag when not in use 	1	1	2		
7.	Misuse	Injury	All	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tool talk Emphasise the use as a tool Explain usual uses Use to be suspended if misuse occurs Staff to monitor group's behaviour and use 	1	3	3		
8.				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 					
9.				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 					
Comments/Concerns: This risk assessment will be reviewed in the event of any incident or near miss in order to be fully informed for the future. It is not an exhaustive list, and is written with experience of FS and bushcraft activities in mind and the incidents (or lack of) that have been encountered in the preceding 11 years.					Recommendations: For bi-annual review- due March 2027				