



Do The Decon

Proper decontamination of mechanical harvesting machines is imperative to disease prevention and control.

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Mechanical harvesting machines, and especially canopy shakers, are always in close contact with the citrus tree canopy and fruit. Like hand harvest-

ing, they can potentially carry diseases from an infected tree to a healthy one. With rising outbreaks of citrus canker now plaguing Florida's citrus, growers must take full responsibility and be in compliance with all rules when decontaminating mechanical harvesters.

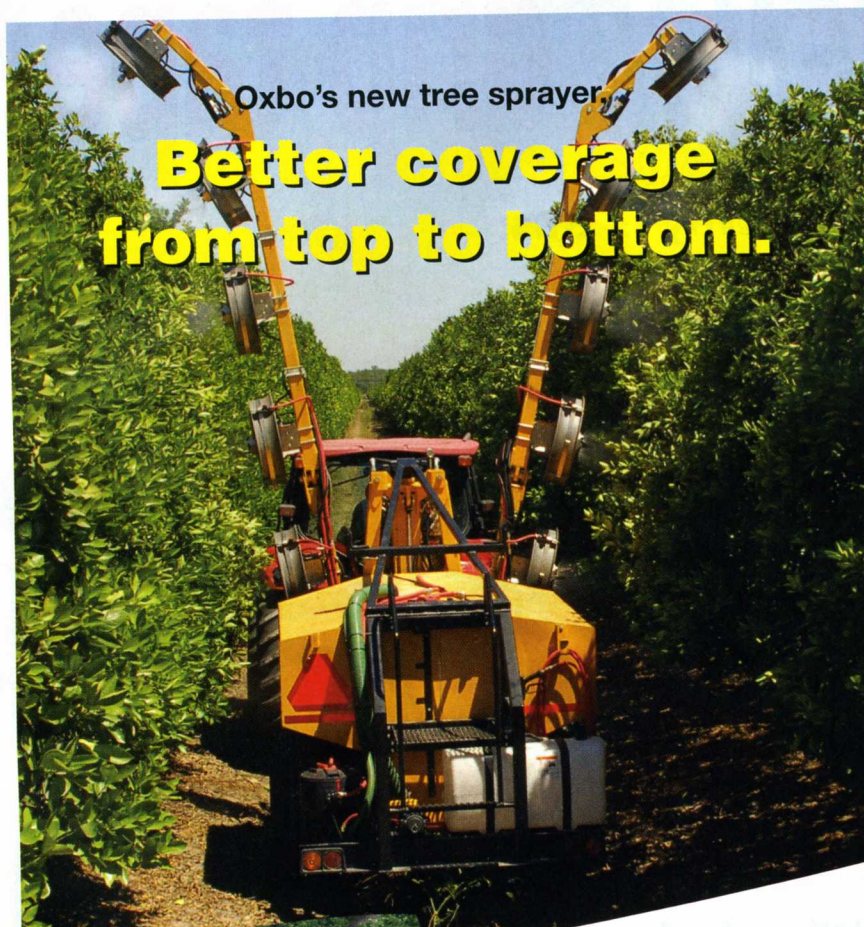
Mechanical harvesting machines can promote canker in two ways: by carrying the infected leaf and plant materials from one tree to another, and by injuring the tree, which could potentially make the tree more susceptible to infection.

Recommended Practices

Currently, decontamination is recommended between each block and required when departing or entering a grove. The decontamination process requires removing plant debris from machines and the undercarriage using an air compressor and washing the machines with antibacterial solution. A complete list of alternative methods and approved chemicals for canker decontamination of equipment is provided by the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services at www.doacs.state.fl.us/pi/canker/pdf/decontamination.pdf.

A combination of applying chlorine or commercial hypochlorite products followed by a cleaning with a pressure washer and detergent is the most commonly used practice.

In general, the decontamination process is a time-consuming and costly process and can take the operators anywhere from one hour to five hours to complete depending on the number of cleaning crew members and if they are cleaning support



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Photo courtesy of UF/IFAS

As mechanical harvesters move through trees to gather fruit, they wound the trunk and leaves, not only making them susceptible to canker, but also leaving bacteria on the machines.

