**Do The Decon**

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echanical 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 decon-
taminating mechanical harvesters.

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

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 sus-
cceptible to infection.

**Recommended Practices**

Currently, decontamination is rec-
commended 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 meth-
ods and approved chemicals for can-
kere decontamination of equipment is
provided by the Florida Department
of Agriculture and Consumer

A combination of applying chlo-
rine 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 oper-
ators 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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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.

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**Citrus**

Oxbo designs, builds, sells and services citrus harvesting and application equipment.