



Issues with clipper wounding before and after harvest

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With the season presenting many challenges, an unnecessary issue that is still prevalent, is wounding around the stem end. European Union market requirements indicate that the peduncle must be cut adjacent to the calyx, keeping within a 2 mm maximum length. There is a pertinent risk for injury at picking, as the clipper reaches too deep into the high shoulders of the fruit. This is particularly important on fruit that has even the slightest raised shoulders.

Rounded ends on clippers will present a much lower risk of damaging the rind. A good clipper design allows it to be handled at an angle. This assists with clipping stems short when the fruit is harvested above the picker's head. To this end, a cleaner cut is achieved with a by-pass cutting system of overlapping blades. This type of clipper has a tip that is rounded slightly upward, lying directly on the calyx for a good, clean cut. There are also no sharp points that can damage the rind. The pinching action of some clippers is precisely the reason for many picking injuries. Blunt clippers are a major source of damage to both the rind (*due to force and manhandling to achieve a cut*) and the stem (*by tearing the stem*).

Important design features of a good picking clipper are:

- Short, rounded blades with a rounded tip (nose)
- Deep, concave blades
- No additional nuts or screws that protrude to press against the fruit during picking
- Comfortable and light to work with
- The clipper should sit flush to the calyx and not cut the calyx, just the stem

A second important issue is the current practice in many packhouses whereby sorting tables are used as *ad hoc* corrective action stations for long stems. **This is unacceptable**, as sorters cannot be expected to do diligent, efficient sorting and clipping. We have to remember that at least 3000 fruit **per minute** moves past the graders. They have also not been trained like the picking teams to focus on avoidance of wounding. Significant numbers of wounding that has been reported are most probably from sorters that are doubling up as stem cutters, and are operating under constant

pressure. Wounding incidence at this point can be verified quite readily by comparing fruit injuries before entry into the packhouse, vs fruit sitting in the packing bins at the end of the line.

Lastly, regular sanitation of clippers during the course of day is important, and should be provided for in the orchard.

See Appendix 1 for figures.

**Appendix 1**

Figure 1: Typical wound caused by clippers when cutting too close to the raised shoulder area.



Figure 2: Good clippers with short, rounded blades and a rounded tip. This type of clippers allows a close, safe cut even when being used above the picker's head.



Figure 3: The clipper should sit flush to the calyx and not cut the calyx, just the stem. The blades overlap when the cut is made, minimizing the risk of ripping the peduncle.



Figure 4: A good example of a clean cut without loose, raggedy ends.



Probleme rondom plukskêr-verwonding voor-en na-oes

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Die huidige seisoen het vele uitdagings en dit is onnodig dat verwonding rondom die stingelent steeds 'n probleem is. Markvereistes in die Europese Unie dui aan dat vrugstingel teenaan die kelkblare gesny moet word, binne die maksimum 2 mm toegelate lengte. Teen hierdie lengte is daar 'n wesentlike gevaaar vir verwonding tydens pluk, aangesien die skêr diep in die hoë skouers van die vrug moet reik. Dis veral belangrik by vrugte met selfs die geringste hoë skouers.

Geronde skêrpunte het 'n baie laer risiko vir beskadiging van die skil. 'n Goed-ontwerpte plukskêr laat toe dat dit teen 'n hoek gebruik kan word. Dit help met die hantering van vrugte wat bokant die plukker se kop hang. Hierdie skoon snit kan verkry word met die verby-aksie-sisteem van oorvleuelende lemme. Hierdie tipe skêrtjie het 'n punt wat effens opwaarts gerond is, sodat dit direk bo-op die kelkblare kan lê vir 'n skoon snit. Daar is dan ook geen skerp punte wat die vrug kan beseer nie. Die knyp-aksie van sommige skêrtjies is presies die oorsaak van verwonding tydens pluk. Verder is stomp skêrtjies 'n groot oorsaak van besering op beide die skil (*hardhandige*) en stingel (*afskeuring*).

Belangrike ontwerpkenmerke van 'n goeie plukskêr is:

- Kort, geronde lemme met 'n ronde punt (neus)
- Diep, konkawe lemme
- Geen addisionele moere en skroewe wat tydens pluk teen die vrug kan druk nie, of wat uitsteek en die vrug kan beseer nie
- Gemaklik en lig om mee te werk
- Die plukskêr moet plat op die kelkblare sit, sonder om die kelkblare raak te sny, slegs die stingel

'n Verdere belangrike problem, is die huidige praktyk waar baie pakhuise die sorteertafels as *ad hoc* regstellingstasies vir lang stingels gebruik. **Hierdie is onaanvaarbaar**, aangesien daar nie van sorteerdery verwag kan word om toegewyde, effektiewe sortering én knipwerk te doen nie. Ons moet onthou dat ten minste 3000 vrugte **per minuut** verby gradeerders beweeg. Hulle word ook nie soos die plukspanne opgelei om op die vermyding van verwonding te fokus nie.

Noemenswaardige aantal beserings wat gerapporteer word, is waarskynlik as gevolg van sorteerdery wat moet funksioneer as stingelsnyers en onder voortdurende druk moet werk. Die voorkoms van beserings op die sorteertafels kan maklik geverifieer word deur vrugwonde vóór die pakhuis, met wonde in die pakbakke aan die einde van die lyn te vergelyk.

Laastens is gereeld sanitasie van die plukskêrtjies deur die loop van die dag belangrik. Daar moet daarvoor in die boord voorsiening gemaak word.

Sien Aanghangsel 1 vir figure.

**Aanhangsel 1**

Figuur 1: Tipiese snywond wat met die knipskêrtjie gemaak word wanneer te naby aan die skouers gesny word.



Figuur 2: Goeie plukskêr met kort, ronde lemme en 'n ronde punt. Hierdie tipe plukskêr maak 'n nabig veilige snit moontlik, selfs indien bokant die plukker se kop gewerk word.



Figuur 3: Die knipper moet plat op die kelkblare rus, maar dit nie raaksny nie, slegs die stingel. Die lemme oorvleuel wanneer die snit gemaak word, wat die risiko vir skeuring van die stingel verminder.



Figuur 4: 'n Goeie voorbeeld van 'n skoon snit, met geen los, slenter punte nie.