

What's Cool

Products that are smart, make your tasks easier and provide cost or labor savings

Bill Pregler

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F-3010 Electric Pruner from Infaco

Versatile pruner saves time and money plus promotes worker health.

It has been barely two years since I wrote the first ever product review on electric hand pruners, and already there are some cool upgrades. Leading the way is the **Electrocoup** pruner from **Infaco** (France).

Since they invented the technology back in 1984, Infaco has sold upwards of 140,000 units worldwide. Their designs continue to evolve, and the latest model, the F-3010, is by far the best electric pruner I have ever seen.

If you have never considered an electric pruner, now is the time. This new unit is so versatile it can be part of any grower's tool box—from vineyards and nurseries to olive and fruit orchards. The reason is Infaco's new quick-change cutting head (four available), which allows a worker to make wood cuts from 35 mm to 55 mm. This will cover everything, from canes to re-grafting or lopping branches 2 inches in diameter.

The Electrocoup pruner comes as a complete package with carrying case, lithium ion battery and charger, the pruner, a holster and redesigned backpack. This fully adjustable "vest" contains the battery and affords ergonomic weight distribution for comfortable wear all day long. What is really cool is it also contains a new LCD display.

Besides monitoring the battery charge, it also has a "cut counter." To register as a full cut, a certain amount of torque (resistance) must register so a worker cannot simply activate the trigger to move the counter. It also has an electronic blade positioning adjustment. Vineyard crews can use a proportional or "finesse" setting for rapid, small pruning cuts or switch to a "pulse" mode whereby the blades travel a full cycle. This is used for slower cuts on larger wood.

The battery supplies an incredible 48 volts, which allows for two full days of vineyard pruning before charging is necessary. Recharging the battery takes only five hours.



The battery pack allows for two full days of pruning before recharging.

The most common complaint against electric pruners is the cost, but this is easily dismissed. The **Australian and New Zealand Grape Growers and Winemakers** participated in a first ever research program that showed not only did workers quickly adapt to the pruners, but their output increased by an astounding 40 percent. Growers I spoke with recently in Oregon reported 50 percent. Multiplying these numbers by your hourly pay rate should eliminate any resistance to price and demonstrate a fast amortization.

You might also consider the health of your workers. Repetitive motion injury (RMI) is now number five on OSHA's all-time favorite claim-and-compensation list. A study by the **UC (Davis) Agricultural Ergonomics Research Center** concluded "powered hand pruners would almost completely eliminate RMI risk factors."

THE *ELECTROCOUP* BENEFITS:

- INCREASE YOUR PRODUCTIVITY
- SAVE MONEY EACH SEASON
- ENJOY THE BEST WORKING CONDITIONS
- REDUCE THE RISK OF CARPAL TUNNEL SYNDROME
- AND MANY MORE...



The Electrocoup pruners from Infaco have quick-change cutting heads for cuts from 35 mm to 55 mm.



The pruning kit includes a battery, charger, ergonomic vest, LCD cut counter and battery life indicator.

Dedicated, long-term workers with developing skills and loyalties are best for the winery. A grower told me "electric pruners are like a universal health care program, and we take care of everyone from the very beginning."

Infaco pruners come with a one-year warranty which is automatically extended a second year if you participate in the annual maintenance service program. At the end of the first season, the service center will perform a complete tune-up, replace O-rings, clean and troubleshoot. This covers the motor, gear set, aluminum body, electronics, sensor card and battery. If annual maintenance is performed religiously, the battery warranty can be extended to a pro-rated five-year program.

Earlier I mentioned cutting versatility and this includes a host of cool accessories. Carbon fiber extension poles (either telescopic or fixed) range from 1.2 m to 3.5 m in length and will be a great add-on for orchard workers. Imagine eliminating the bulk of your OSHA ladder-climbing issues. There is a vibrator available for olive harvesting and even a saw attachment.

What's Cool: Three hot buttons for me are saving money, increasing production and monitoring the health of your workers. You can hit all three with the electric hand pruner. While there are other models available, this latest entry from Infaco, with the quick-change cutting blades and range of accessories, finally offers a totally universal piece of equipment.

For the smaller vineyard they make perfect sense, especially if you are part of the pruning crew. I personally know of several large growers, however, who equipped their entire staff at a substantial investment. The ROI was still under two years.

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