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journal or publication title	The journal of protozoology research
volume	2
number	1
page range	34-39
year	1992-01
URL	http://id.nii.ac.jp/1588/00001719/

Biotin-labeled Genomic DNA Probe for the Detection of *Theileria sergenti* and its Nucleotide Sequence

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Received 17 May 1991 / Accepted 28 October 1991

Key words: DNA probe diagnosis, nucleotide sequence, *Theileria sergenti*

Bovine theileriosis is economically one of the most important tick-borne protozoan parasite disease of grazing cattle in Japan. It is caused by *Theileria sergenti*, and brings about mild hyperthermia and anemia in cattle. The diagnosis of *T. sergenti* has routinely relied upon laborious microscopical examination of Giemsa-stained blood smears.

Recent advances in molecular biology have made it possible to develop diagnostic assays that use nucleic acid probes to detect pathogens directly, specifically and sensitively in clinical specimens. The utility of nucleic acid probes for routine diagnosis of pathogens has been limited by the use of radiolabeled probes for their detection. However, this limitation has been overcome by the development of non-radioactive detection systems (Langer et al. 1981, Leary et al. 1983). We previously reported the molecular cloning of genomic DNA of *T. sergenti* (Kajiwara et al. 1990). One of the cloned genomic DNA fragments (pTs-11-D1) was used to detect *T. sergenti* in a dot blot hybridization assay (Hirano et al. 1991). This pTs-11-D1 probe did not react with DNA of *Babesia ovata* or *Anaplasma centrale* by dot blot and Southern hybridization as reported by Hirano et al. (1991). However, the same probe hybridized to DNA of *Theileria buffeli* which may be taxonomically related to *T. sergenti* (Matsuba et al. 1991). In the present study, we evaluated a dot blot hybridization assay using a genomic DNA pTs-11-D1 probe for the detection of *T. sergenti* as a practical diagnostic method. The nucleotide sequence of this probe is also described.

T. SERGENTI GENOMIC DNA PROBE

We compared the dot blot hybridization using a pTs-11-D1 probe for *T. sergenti* with routine microscopic diagnosis. A splenectomized calf was infected with *T. sergenti* (Chitose stock) by nymphal ticks of *Haemophysalis longicornis* which had been infected with *T. sergenti*. The calf was kept under daily clinical and hematological observations and treated with blood transfusion or anti-parasite drug if it showed severe anemia. The piroplasm DNA was prepared from parasitized erythrocytes as described previously (Kajiwara et al. 1990) with slight modifications; infected erythrocytes were lysed by *Aeromonas hydrophila* hemolysin (Sugimoto et al. 1990) instead of 0.2% NaCl, and purified parasites were digested with proteinase K (0.3 mg/ml) instead of pronase E. The DNA was spotted on a sheet of cellulosenitron (E) filter (Schleicher & Schuell, F. R. G.), denatured in 0.5N NaOH, and fixed onto the membrane by cross-linking with short wavelength ultraviolet light. Genomic DNA pTs-11-D1 probe was labeled with biotin 16-dUTP (Boehringer, USA) by random priming (Feiberg and Vogelstein 1983). Hybridization was performed as described previously (Kajiwara et al. 1990). The hybridization solution containing 4x SSPE (0.6M NaCl, 0.04M NaH₂PO₄ and 4mM EDTA) , 10x Denhardt's solution (0.2% Ficoll, 0.2% polyvinylpyrrolidone and 0.2% bovine serum albumin), 150 µg/ml salmon sperm DNA, and 50% formamide was used to prehybridize filters at 42 °C for 2 h. After prehybridization, the buffer was removed and fresh hybridization solution was added with the biotinylated probes. After incubation at 42 °C for 18 h, the filters were washed three times at room temperature for 5 min and twice at 55 °C for 15 min each in 0.2x SSC (0.03M NaCl and 3mM sodium citrate) containing 0.1% SDS. The biotinylated probes were visualized using the BluGENE nonradioactive nucleic acid detection system (BRL, USA).

T. sergenti piroplasms were detected at day 11 after inoculation by the microscopical examination of Giemsa-stained blood smear. *T. sergenti* DNA was first detected at day 7 after inoculation by using pTs-11-D1 probe (Table 1.).

Table 1. Detection of *Theileria sergenti* from calf erythrocytes

Assay	Days after inoculation															
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	21	26
Giemsa staining (parasitemia %)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.01	0.05	0.05	0.10	8.15	23.2
Dot blot hybridization	ND	ND	ND	ND	-	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+

ND: Not done

T. SERGENTI GENOMIC DNA PROBE

Since clone pTs-11-D1 was derived from DMA of *T. sergenti* (Chitose stock) which was isolated in Hokkaido, we examined the reactivity of the DNA probe with DNA of *T. sergenti* isolates from 11 geographically different districts in Japan. Purified piroplasm DNA was applied onto the membrane with HYBRI-SLOT™ MANIFOLD (BRL, USA) and probed with pTs-11-D1. The probe hybridized with DNA from all the isolates at a similar intensity. This result suggested that the sequence detected by the DNA probe is conserved among the *T. sergenti* isolates in Japan (Fig. 1.). The probe did not hybridized with DNA prepared from bovine erythrocyte infected with *Babesia ovata* or *Anaplasma centrale* under the same hybridization condition (data not shown).



Fig. 1. Reactivity of pTs-11-D1 for DNA of *T. sergenti* isolates from geographically different districts. Each piroplasm DNA was extracted from purified parasites and 0.1-0.2 µg applied onto the membrane. The filters were hybridized with biotin 16-dUTP-labeled pTs-11-D1. Slots 1 to 12 correspond to *T. sergenti* isolates collected from 1; Hokkaido (Chitose), 2; Hokkaido (Hiyama), 3; Hokkaido (Oshima), 4; Hokkaido (Shintoku), 5; Hokkaido (Abashiri), 6; Aomori, 7; Fukushima, 8; Tochigi, 9; Shizuoka, 10; Okayama, 11; Fukuoka, 12; Kagoshima.

As the pTs-11-D1 fragment hybridized with more than 14 *Bam*H I restriction fragments of *T. sergenti* genomic DNA, it detects a repetitive sequence of the genome (Hirano et al. 1991). Furthermore, it hybridized with a 6 kb fragment of piroplasm mRNA by Northern blotting (unpublished observation). To elucidate whether there are internal repeats within the probe sequence as known in diagnostic DNA probes of other parasitic organisms (Barker 1990, Klion et al. 1991), and whether this DNA fragment of 2 kbp in length contains protein coding region, we sequenced the pTs-11-D1 fragment. Clone pTs-11-D1 was subcloned into the Bluescript KS⁺ vector and deletion clones were generated for dideoxy sequencing (Henikoff 1984). Sequencing by the dideoxy method was performed using [α -³²P]dCTP and 7-deaza-sequencing kits (TOYOBO Co., Ltd., Japan). Sequence analysis verified the cloned fragment to be 1,998 base pairs in length (Fig. 2.). The A/T content was 63%, and the G/C content was 37%. The pTs-11-D1 did not contain portions of a long open reading frame in both strands (Fig. 3.). No internal repeats or inverted repeats were recognized. Significant homology was not detected with sequences stored in the GenBank data bases using the DNASIS program (Hitachi Software Engineering Co., Ltd., Japan). Recently, a genomic DNA encoding a 41 kDa protein of *Plasmodium falciparum* was cloned and sequenced (Knapp et al. 1991).

T. SERGENTI GENOMIC DNA PROBE

GAAAATATAT	TTATGGCTTG	AAGGATTATC	GAATAAATAA	ATCTAGGGAA	ATAATTCAC	ATTAAACTTA	70
ATTGACAGAT	GTGCATGGAC	GACATTGCAC	ATAACATTAT	AACGAGCACA	AGGAATAACG	AGCTCATGTT	140
ACTTTTTTTA	AGATTTTTAC	TATCGTTCCCT	CAATAGGTTG	TTTGTAACA	TTCTTACTTC	GTTTTCAGTT	210
TATCATGTTT	TAGATGATTT	GGTAAAAGAG	ACAATFAAAA	CACAGGATCT	TAAAAAATTT	GAAACAGCTC	280
CTATGGTTGC	AACTATGACG	GTAATGCTCA	AGATTCAGA	TTCGATGTTG	TTCGTTCCAG	ATGCAATGAA	350
ATTTTTCACT	TATTCATTGA	TGCTATATCT	CAGAGCTGAG	TACTACATGA	ATGACTGTTC	TCCTAACTTT	420
TATATCAGTG	GTAACAAATT	CACTGGTTCC	ACTCAAACAT	CAAATGTGGT	AACTGAGGTA	ACCAATGAAA	490
TTCCAATGA	TGTTGTTGTA	TATTATAAGG	ACGCACTTTC	ACATGGGTCA	CACACGGGAA	GACCTAATGA	560
ATAAGAACTA	TGAACCTTAT	TTGAAAAACA	TCATTTGCGA	CTAAAACGTG	GCGAGATGGC	CATTGTCACT	630
GGTTCCAAGG	GTTCTGGGAA	ATCAAATTTT	ATCAAATCAT	ATACTTGGTG	AGATGACCCT	GGTTGGGGGT	700
TCCATGGCTG	TAGTACCATT	ATACACCTCA	ATGCCATATT	CTATGCATCT	CAAGACATAT	GGCTTCACGT	770
GGCACTATCA	GATCCATATT	ACATTTGGTT	ATCGATTGCA	TGAACATCTG	TACATGCTGT	GTTGAAGGCA	840
GTTGAACTTG	AGTATGACAT	ATCGACCTGG	GAGAAGGGTG	ACCTCAGAGT	AGTCTCTGAT	AATGCTCATT	910
CATTGAGTGG	TGGTCAGAGA	GTGAGATTGG	AGTTAGCTCG	TGCCGTCTAT	GCTTATTTGG	TGTTCCACAA	980
AGTCAACGAG	GAGTATAATA	ACAGTCAATG	TTCCTACCTG	ATGTGCTTGG	ATTGTTTCGTT	CCATGGTCTA	1050
GATCCTTATG	TATCCAAAAC	CATATTC AAT	AACCTGTTTA	ATCTTAAAGA	TGGAATATTA	GTAAATGATG	1120
ATCTATGTGT	TGCTTATATG	TCTACAAAAA	GCGAACTTAT	AGGACTTTCA	TCAGCTGAAG	TATCGTTCCT	1190
AAACATAACT	TTGTACAACA	TTGCGAATCA	AAAACCTGAA	TAAAATCAAG	GATATTCGAC	ATACGGAGAC	1260
GGCTAGAAAAG	CCTTTGCCCT	CGGAATACAG	GCTATACCAA	CTGATGAAAT	AATAAAGTTG	TGTGAATCGG	1330
GTGAAACACC	GCGAAGGGAG	AATAGCATTA	GTAACAAAAA	AGTACGAGGA	TTCGTTGATA	ATAAGTCCCT	1400
GAATCCAAAG	TAACAAAGCA	GAAGATCGGA	TTGGCTTTTA	AGCCGTATCT	CATGTACGCC	AAATCATTGG	1470
ATTCCATATC	GTGCTGTTTA	TAATATTCAC	CATTGTTFAC	GAATCCATTG	AAACGTCCAA	ATACGTGCTT	1540
GCTGGTGATT	TAGGAGCGGT	AATATTGACT	ACGTCAGGAA	AAATATCAGA	TCGGAAGCAA	TACATTGAAG	1610
CATTCCAAAA	GATTAGAAAT	TCATGTGATG	ATACTCTATT	GAAAAATTAAG	AAACTTACAG	TGGCTCTTCT	1680
AGTTTTCTGC	TTTTAGCCAA	TTTCGTTTTG	ACGTTCTGCT	GCCGTGCGTG	GATGCAAAAG	GATACACGAG	1750
TACTGTATCA	ATTCACATGAT	AAATAACCAA	GTCGTGATC	GTGAAGATTA	AGAAATACAG	CAGTGAAATC	1820
GTAACATTCT	TGGCTTCCGA	CGTCTTCATC	ATAGACGAGA	ACTTTGGCCC	TTGTCTATCT	TCAATGTTGA	1890
TACTGTTTAT	AGAGGTGCTC	CTTCAGACTT	TAGTTCTGGC	ATACTATTTT	CCCATTTGCA	TACCAGTCAT	1960
AGTAATATGC	CTTTTCGTAA	TCATTAACCT	TATTTTTTC				1998

Fig.2. Nucleotide sequence of clone pTs-11-D1. clone pTs-11-D1 was subcloned into Bluescript KS⁺ vector and deletion clones were generated for dideoxy sequencing.

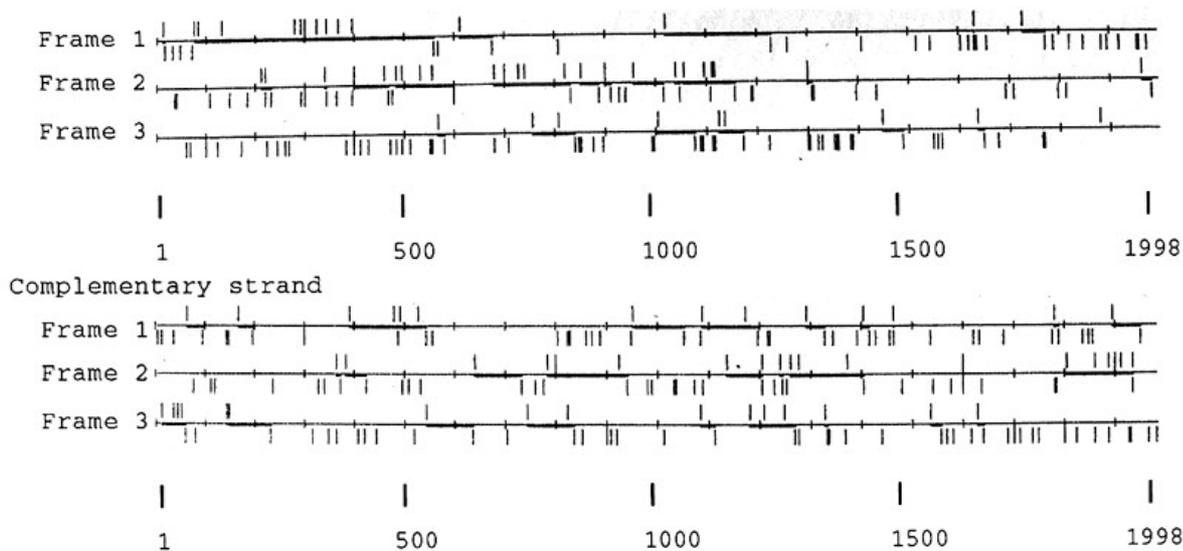


Fig. 3. The occurrence of initiation (ATG) and termination (TAG, TGA, TAA) codons of both strands. Nucleotide numbers are shown at the bottom. Vertical lines initiation (above the horizontal lines) and termination (under the horizontal lines) codons in three frames in both strands.

T. SERGENTI GENOMIC DNA PROBE

The gene consists of 9 exons with short open reading frames coding for 23 to 109 amino acids, respectively. If the probe DNA of *T. sergenti* is a part of a gene carrying several intervening sequences, disagreement between our sequence data indicating that the sequence does not contain long open reading frames, and the result of Northern blot analysis could be explained. To elucidate this, cDNA library of *T. sergenti* should be screened with this DNA probe and DNA sequence of the transcript should be compared with that of genomic DNA presented in this paper.

In conclusion, the use of the pTs-11-D1 DNA probe is practical for early diagnosis of *T. sergenti* infection with high sensitivity and specificity. As the probe hybridized with DNA of *T. sergenti* isolates collected from various regions in Japan, it is also useful for epidemiological studies of *T. sergenti* infection in Japan. Furthermore, the use of DNA probes will elucidate taxonomical relationships among benign *Theileria* species, *T. sergenti/buffeli/ orientalis*, which are distributed in Asian and European countries and Australia (Stewart et al. 1988, Uilenberg et al. 1985), at the molecular level.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS :

We are grateful to Dr. S. Mori, Bayer Japan Ltd., for arranging the collection of *T. sergenti*-infected blood from different districts in Japan.

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