

STUDIES ON SOME SYMBIOTIC BACTERIA OF SOME ENTOMOPATHOGENIC NEMATODES

By

GEHAN MOHAMED SAYED AHMED

B. Sc. Agric. Sci., (Biotechnology), Fac. Agric., Cairo Univ., 2004

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APPROVAL SHEET

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ABSTRACT

In this work, *Xenorhabdus* spp and *Photorhabdus* spp. were isolated from a local nematode strain *Steinernema* sp. , *Heterorahbitids* sp , a foreign *Heterorahbitids* sp, a foreign well-identified strain, i.e., *Steinernema riborvae* and *Heterorahbitids indica* kindly supplied by Florida State University, USA. The identity of the isolated bacteria was authenticated referring to their cultural, morphological and biochemical traits as well as to their entomopathogenicity against *Galleria mellonella*, *Agrotis ipsilon*, *Spodoptera littoralis* and *Rhynchophorus ferrugineus*. The 16S rRNA technique was adopted for conclusive identification of two *Xenorhabdus* spp strains and three *Photorhabdus* spp. The antagonistic properties of the isolated *Xenorhabdus* spp and *Photorhabdus* spp. isolates were studied in submerged batch fermentations . Five periods were tested for selection of the ideal time of *Photorhabdus* sp. (xH1, xHi and xH2), *Xenorhabdus* sp. (xSr and xS1) to give their maximum antibiotic activity using four different fermentation media using the Disc Diffusion Technique. Five *Xenorhabdus* spp and *Photorhabdus* spp. strains showed various antimicrobial activities against wide spectra of Gram +ve, Gram -ve bacteria as well as yeasts. Oral administration of cell-free culture supernatants of *Xenorhabdus* spp. isolates exhibited high levels of toxicity against *Agrotis ipsilon* and *Spodoptera littoralis*. All toxins achieved high mortality within 72h after treatment. Histopathological effect of *Xenorhabdus* spp and *Photorhabdus* spp strains on the midgut of *Spodoptera littoralis* was examined.

Key words :*Xenorhabdus* spp., *photorhabdus* spp., oral toxicity, antimicrobial activities.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to whom my heartfelt thanks; to my father, my mother, Dr. Olfat , my dear mai , my sisters, my brothers and my friends for their patience, help and for all the support they lovely offered along the period of my post graduation.

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CONTENTS

	Page
INTRODUCTION.....	1
REVIEW OF LITERATURE.....	3
1. Entomopathogenic nematodes and their microsymbionts	3
2. <i>Xenorhabdus</i> life cycle	4
3. <i>Xenorhabdus</i> scientific classification	6
4. <i>Photorhabdus luminescens</i> lifecycle.....	6
5. <i>Photorhabdus luminescens</i> Scientific classification	8
6. Bioinsecticidal properties of <i>Xenorhabdus</i> and <i>Photorhabdus</i>	8
7. Antagonistic capabilities of <i>Photorhabdus</i> and <i>Xenorhabdus</i>	21
MATERIALS AND METHODS.....	27
1. Microorganisms	27
2. Insects	27
3. Nematodes	28
4. Cultural Media.....	29
5. Chemicals	29
6. Equipments	30
METHODES	30
1. Rearing Techniques	30
2. Isolation and characterization of <i>Xenorhabdus</i> and <i>Photorhabdus</i>	33
3. Molecular characterization of bacterial isolates	34
4. Antagonistic properties of <i>Xenorhabdus</i> spp and <i>Photorhabdus</i> spp. strains	35
5. Entomopathogenic capabilities of <i>Xenorhabdus</i> sp and <i>Photorhabdus</i> spp strains.....	37
6. Foliar application of <i>Photorhabdus</i> sp. and <i>Xenorhabdus</i> sp.	38
7. Chemical determinations.....	38
8. Histopathological effect of <i>Xenorhabdus</i> spp and <i>Photorhabdus</i> spp strains	42
9. Statistical Analysis	42

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION.....	43
1. Isolation and Identification of <i>Xenorhabdus</i> spp and <i>Photorhabdus</i> spp	43
2. Molecular characterization of bacterial strains	45
3. Antagonistic properties of <i>Xenorhabdus</i> sp and <i>Photorhabdus</i> spp. strains	46
a. Antagonistic activities of EPN strains as affected by fermentation period	49
b. Antagonistic activities of EPN strains as affected by the type of culture medium	50
c. Antagonistic activities of EPN strains as affected by incubation temperature	57
d. Antagonistic activities of EPN strains as affected by different carbon sources.....	62
e. Antagonistic activities of EPB strains as affected by culture pH	66
4. Oral toxicity of bacterial cell-free supernatant against <i>A. ipsilon</i>, <i>S. littoralis</i> and <i>Rhynchophorus ferrugineus</i>	71
5. Foliar application of <i>Photorhabdus</i> spp. and <i>Xenorhabdus</i> spp . against <i>Spodoptera littoralis</i>	79
6. Protein content, proteolytic and lipolytic activities of EPB	82
a. Proteolytic activities of the EFB strains	82
b. Lipolytic activities of EPB strains	84
7. Histopathological effect of <i>Xenorhabdus</i> spp and <i>Photorhabdus</i> spp strains on the midgut of <i>Spodoptera littoralis</i>	85
SUMMARY.....	95
REFERENCES	97
ARABIC SUMMARY	

LIST OF TABLES

No.	Title	Page
1	<i>Xenorhabdus</i> and <i>Photorhabdus</i> species and their nematode symbionts	28
2	Components (g/l) of the cultural media used in submerged fermentation batches for toxin production by <i>Xenorhabdus</i> sp.....	30
3	Biochemical characters of <i>Xenorhabdus</i> spp and <i>Photorhabdus</i> spp.....	44
4	Three way ANOVA Completely Randomized.....	59
5	Three way ANOVA Completely Randomized.....	63
6	Three way ANOVA Completely Randomize.....	68
7	Two way ANOVA Completely Randomized.....	75
8	Two way ANOVA Completely Randomize.....	81
9	Total protein content (μgml^{-1}) in <i>Xenorhabdus</i> spp and <i>Photorhabdus</i> spp. culture supernatants...	82
10	Determination of protease in <i>Xenorhabdus</i> spp and <i>Photorhabdus</i> spp	84
11	Lipolytic activiries of EPB strains.....	85

LIST OF FIGURES

No.	Title	Page
1	<i>Xenorhabdus</i> life cycle	6
2	The representation of complex life cycle of <i>Photorhabdus luminescens</i>	8
3	Bovine serum albumin standard curve	39
4	Lipase standard curve	40
5	Bovine serum albumin standard.....	41
6	PCR amplification of 16s rRNA	45
7	Diameters of growth inhibition zones produced by cell-free supernatants of <i>Photorhabdus</i> . Sp (xH2) culture in 4 different media against eight test-microorganisms.....	52
8	Diameters of growth inhibition zones produced by cell-free supernatants of <i>Photorhabdus</i> . Sp (xH1) culture in 4 different media and eight test-microorganisms	53
9	Diameters of growth inhibition zones produced by cell-free supernatants of <i>Photorhabdus</i> . Sp (xHi) culture in 4 different media and eight test microorganisms	54
10	Diameters of growth inhibition zones produced by cell-free supernatants of <i>Xenorhabdus</i> . Sp (xSr) culture in 4 different media and eight test-microorganisms.....	55
11	Diameters of growth inhibition zones produced by cell-free supernatants of <i>Xenorhabdus</i> . Sp (xS1) culture in 4 different media and eight test-microorganisms	56

12	Effect of different Temperature on antibiotic activity using different eight testers.	60
13	Effect of different carbon sources on antibiotic activity using different eight testers.	64
14	Effect of different pH sources on antibiotic activity using different eight testers.	69
15	Mortality of <i>Agrotis ipsilon</i>	76
16	Mortality of <i>Spodoptera littoralis</i>	77
17	Mortality of <i>Rhynchophorus ferrugineus</i>	78
18	Mortality of <i>Spodoptera littoralis</i>	81
19	Internal structure of cotton leaf worm in gp-1 showing the normal histological structure of the fore and mid guts with empty lumen	89
20	Internal structure of cotton leaf worm in gp-1 showing the lining epithelium of the gut	89
21	Internal structure of cotton leaf worm in gp-1 showing the magnification of the lining epithelium in the mid gut	89
22	Internal structure of cotton leaf worm in gp-1 showing the magnification to identify the basophilic tall nuclei of the lining epithelium of the gut (m)	90
23	Hyalinization in the covering surface layer	90
24	Hyalinization with lose of pigmentation were detected in the outer surface	90
25	Obstruction in the gut between the for and mid one ...	91
26	associated with appearance of deep eosinophilic coloration in the most of the lining cells of the mid gut	91
27	associated with appearance of deep eosinophilic coloration in the most of the lining cells of the mid gut	91

28	Obstruction was detected in the gut between the for and mid one	92
29	associated with appearance of goblet cells formation	92
30	A deep eosinophilia in some cells in focal manner	92
31	The lining epithelium of the gut showed deep eosinophilic cytoplasm with lose of the nuclei	93
32	the lining epithelium of the gut showed deep eosinophilic cytoplasm with lose of the nuclei	93
33	Desquamation in the lining epithelium of the gut	94
34	Goblet cells formation in massive manner	94

INTRODUCTION

The indiscriminate use of agrochemicals in intensive agriculture causes a global serious environmental problem. Many pesticides survive in plants for long periods, enter the food chain, and so can be detected at high levels in many feed and food crops, meat, and dairy products. Such environmental pollution hazard with profound effects on human health is severe in developing rather than developed countries. Many bacterial and fungal bioinsecticides are commercially available for use in biological control of wide spectra of plant pests; however, exploring new biological control agents is badly needed. Among bacterial bioagents are the Gram-ve bacteria *Photorhabdus* sp. and *Xenorhabdus* sp.; the microsymbionts of the entomopathogenic soil nematodes from the families *Heterorhabditis* and *Steinernema* (Forst *et al.*, 1997). These bacteria produce insecticidal factors critical for their pathogenic activities against insects (Ffrench-Constant *et al.*, 2007). The nematodes enter the openings of the insect body, such as the mouth, spiracle, or anus where nematodes regurgitate bacteria, which are housed in a vesicle of their intestine, directly into the hemocoel (Ciche and Ensign, 2003). The bacteria produce a range of proteins and metabolites which kill the insect host (Bowen *et al.*, 1998). Both nematodes and bacteria replicate in the insect cadaver (Ffrench-Constant *et al.*, 2003). *Photorhabdus* and *Xenorhabdus* bacteria can be isolated from the infective juvenile nematodes that carry them or from the infected insect cadaver. They can be *in vitro* cultured as free living without hosts under laboratory conditions (Forst *et al.*, 1997). The

bacteria secrete entomopathogenic factors directly into the growth medium. Interestingly, these bacteria or their toxic factors are insecticidal when they are ingested through the insect mouth or when injected into the hemolymph (Ffrench-Constant *et al.*, 2003). Oral toxicity of *Photorhabdus luminescens* and *Xenorhabdus luminescens* was reported to be lethal to *Manduca sexta* larvae (Blackburn *et al.*, 1998). Cells and their secreted proteins of *Xenorhabdus nematophilus* were described as orally toxic to neonatal larvae of *Helicoverpa armigera* (Khandelwal and Banerjee-Bhatnagar, 2003). A possible exploitation of *Xenorhabdus* and *Photorhabdus* as microbial biopesticides in agriculture was adopted by Ffrench-Constant *et al.* (2007). However, there is no much data on the insecticidal capabilities of native entomopathogenic nematodes and their microsymbionts isolated from the Egyptian soils and it is desirable to study the native potential biocidal characteristics of the entomopathogenic nematodes and their microsymbionts.

In this work, it was planned to isolate *Xenorhabdus* and *Photorhabdus* from their nematode symbionts and study their cultural, morphological, biochemical and molecular characteristics. Using two insect genotypes, an experiment was conducted for studying the oral toxicity of *Xenorhabdus* and *Photorhabdus* cultures as well as the activity of their cell-free filtrates on nematode and insect host. Furthermore, the antagonistic activities of these bacteria were *in vitro* examined against some microorganisms.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

1. Entomopathogenic nematodes and their microsymbionts

Burnell and Stock (2002) reported that the entomopathogenic nematodes (EPN) *Heterorhabditis* and *Steinernema* together with their symbiont bacteria *Photorhabdus* and *Xenorhabdus*, respectively, are obligate and lethal parasites of insects. EPN can provide effective biological control of some important lepidopteran, dipteran and coleopteran pests of commercial crops and they are amenable to large-scale culture in liquid fermentors. They are unique among rhabditids in having a symbiotic relationship with an enteric bacterium species. The bacterial symbiont is required to kill the insect host and to digest the host tissues, thereby providing suitable nutrient conditions for nematode growth and development.

Mathieu *et al.* (2006) showed that *Xenorhabdus* symbionts modified the competition between their *Steinernema* associates. This suggests that *Xenorhabdus* not only provides *Steinernema* with access to food sources but also furnishes new abilities to deal with biotic parameters such as competitors.

Stock *et al.* (2008) documented that Entomopathogenic nematodes *Steinernema* and *Heterorhabditis* spp. (Nematoda: *Steinernematidae*, *Heterorhabditidae*) and their bacterial symbiont *Xenorhabdus* and *Photorhabdus* spp. Gram-negative *Enterobacteriaceae* represent an emerging model of terrestrial animal-microbe symbiotic relationships. *Xenorhabdus* and *Photorhabdus* spp. are harbored as