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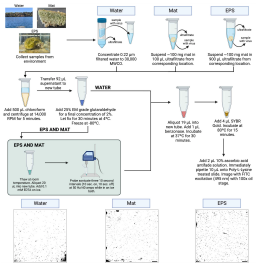
Viral Enumeration of Microbial Mat Samples Using Wet Mount Epifluorescence Microscopy



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Madeline Bellanger[1,2], Pieter Visscher[3], Richard Allen White III[1,2]

[1]Department of Bioinformatics and Genomics, North Carolina Research Campus, The University of North Carolina at Charlotte, Kannapolis, North Carolina, USA;
[2]Computational Intelligence to Predict Health and Environmental Risks (CIPHER), The University of North Carolina at Charlotte, Charlotte, North Carolina, USA;
[3]Department of Marine Sciences and Geoscience, University of Connecticut, Storrs, Connecticut, USA

M Madeline Bellanger
UNC Charlotte

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We use this protocol and it's working

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Abstract

Epifluorescence microscopy (EFM) has been the gold standard method for environmental viral enumeration for over 25 years. Currently, standard EFM methods using the Anodisc filters are no longer cost-effective (>$15 per slide). We present a cost-effective method for environmental viral enumeration from aquatic samples, microbial mats, and exopolymeric substances (EPSs) within modern microbialites using EFM. Our integrated approach, which includes filtration, differential centrifugation, chloroform treatment, glutaraldehyde fixation, benzonase nuclease treatment, probe sonication (EPS and mat only), SYBR Gold staining, wet mounting, and imaging, provides a robust method for modern microbialites and aquatic samples. Our method provides a robust and cost-effective (~$0.75 per sample) viral enumeration within modern microbialites and aquatic ecosystems.

Guidelines

This method is used to enumerate viruses in microbial mat samples collected from the environment. See our protocols for water viral enumeration, EPS viral enumeration, and soil viral enumeration!

Materials

Consumables

- Whatman grade 1 qualitative filter paper
- 0.65 µm PVDF Durapore membrane filter (hydrophilic)
- 0.45 µm PVDF Durapore membrane filter (hydrophilic)
- 0.22 µm PVDF Durapore membrane filter (hydrophilic)
- 30 kDa MWCO Millipore centrifuge filters (of desired size)
- 1.5 mL low protein binding, nuclease free microcentrifuge tubes
- P1000 pipette tips
- P200 pipette tips
- P10 pipette tips
- 5 ml Eppendorf tubes
- Microscope slides
- Slide covers

Chemicals

- 70% Ethanol
- 25% EM grade glutaraldehyde
- Chloroform
- EDTA
- Benzonase
- SYBR Gold nucleic acid stain
- Poly-L-Lysine 0.1% w/v
- 1X PBS
- Ascorbic acid
- Microscope immersion oil

Equipment

- P1000 pipette
- P200 pipette
- P10 pipette
- Centrifuge capable of holding 50 ml conical tubes or wide neck bottles (62 mm diameter; 146 mm length, only if using Centricon-70 plus centrifuge filters)
- Microcentrifuge
- Vortexer
- Probe sonicator
- Heat block
- Balance
- Fluorescence microscope equipped with a 100x oil immersion lens and blue excitation light (495 nm)

Protocol materials

Chloroform Step 5

Benzonase® Nuclease **Merck MilliporeSigma (Sigma-Aldrich) Catalog #**E1014 SIGMA Step 17

Safety warnings

- Fixation with glutaraldehyde and chloroform treatment needs to be performed in a fume hood with a face shield and proper PPE.
- Needles used to remove glutaraldehyde from serum vials need to be disposed of in a sharps container within the fume hood. Never replace the cap on a needle. Once the needle has been used, immediately deposit it into the sharps container.

Sample Collection and Cleaning

1 Tare a 1.5 mL low protein binding nuclease free tube on a top loading balance.

2 Collect approximately 100 mg of mat using a scoopula or similar tool cleaned with 70% ethanol and transfer to the tube. Record the mass of the mat sample.

3 Add 100 µL ultrafiltrate from the same location to the tube.

4 Vortex at medium-high speed for 00:00:10 . 10s

5 Add 500 µL of Chloroform **Contributed by users** to the sample.

Safety information

A lab coat, face and eye protection, and double gloves should be worn whenever working with chloroform, in addition to being performed in a fume hood.

Note

A small glass pasteur pipette must be used when working with chloroform. The pasteur pipette's full volume should be 500 µL.

6 Centrifuge the samples at 14.000 rpm, 00:05:00 (standard mini-fuge speed). 5m

7 Carefully pipette 92 µL of the top layer of supernatant into a fresh 1.5 mL low protein binding nuclease free microcentrifuge tube, proceed to the next section: Fixation (go to step #8).

Fixation

8 Add 8 µL of EM grade 25% glutaraldehyde to each of the 92 µL samples (final concentration of 2%). Pipette to mix.

Safety information

Fixation should be done in a fume hood as it requires working with glutaraldehyde Additionally, a lab coat, face and eye protection, and gloves should be worn whenever working with glutaraldehyde.

9 Allow samples to fix in the dark at 4 °C for 00:30:00 . 30m

10 OPTIONAL: Flash freeze samples using liquid nitrogen. If liquid nitrogen is not available, putting samples directly in a -80°C freezer can be done. Samples can be stored in the -80°C freezer until use.

Note

This is an optional stopping point. Freezing is not necessary and may cause a decrease in viral counts. If you do not have time to proceed to dyeing and imaging, freeze your samples until use.

Preparation for EFM and Imaging

11 Thaw fixed samples at room temperature (if applicable). During this time, start heating a heat block to 37 °C . Start heating another heat block to 80 °C .

12 Aliquot 20 µL of sample into a new 1.5 mL low protein binding nuclease free microcentrifuge tube.

13 Add [M] 0.1 millimolar (mM) EDTA to the sample with the tube on ice (4 µL of [M] 0.5 millimolar (mM) EDTA).

14 Incubate the samples On ice for 00:15:00 in the dark. 15m

15 Probe sonicate the samples in three 00:00:10 intervals with 00:00:10 between each interval at 50 Hz/40 amp while in an ice bath. 20s

Note

1. Use a foam tube rack to keep the mouth of the tube out of the water.
2. Make sure to use a probe sonicator with a microtip to ensure the probe fits in the tube and makes contact with the sample for the duration of the 10 second interval.
3. Clean the probe tip with 70% ethanol before and after each sample has been through the entire sonication cycle.

16 Aliquot 19 µL of each sample into a new 1.5 mL low protein binding nuclease free microcentrifuge tube.

17 Add 1 µL of

Benzonase® Nuclease **Merck MilliporeSigma (Sigma-Aldrich) Catalog #**E1014 SIGMA

to each sample. Pipette to mix.

18 Incubate the samples in a heat block at 37 °C for 00:30:00 . 30m

19 Add 4 µL SYBR Gold working stock to the sample in the dark and pipette to mix.

Note

The stain is light sensitive so the following steps should be done in the dark. Before preparing working stock, be sure to check if there is already some prepared. Working stocks may be stored in the -20°C freezer or one working stock at a time may be stored in the 4°C fridge.

1. Thaw commercial stock of
   SYBR Gold Nucleic Acid Gel Stain **Contributed by users Catalog #** S-11494
   at room temperature in the dark.
2. Once the commercial stock is thawed, vortex for 10 seconds on medium-high speed, then centrifuge in a microcentrifuge for 5 minutes.
3. Dilute the commercial stock 1:10 with autoclaved and filtered (0.22 µm PVDF membrane filters) molecular biology grade water in a fresh 5 mL Eppendorf tube.
4. Filter the working stock through a 0.22 µm syringe filter into a fresh 5 mL Eppendorf tube.
5. Aliquot 250 µL of the working stock into fresh black or darkened 1.5 mL low protein binding nuclease free microcentrifuge tubes.
6. Store the working stocks at -20°C.
7. Working stock that is being used should be stored at 4°C in the dark. It can work effectively for about a month, but will degrade over time (take note of when working stock is moved to 4°C).
8. Working stock at -20°C can be stored indefinitely and transferred to 4°C when ready to use. Avoid freezing and thawing multiple times.

20 Incubate the sample in a heat block covered in aluminum foil at 80 °C for 00:15:00 . 15m

21 While the sample is incubating, prepare a 10% ascorbic acid antifade solution.

Note

Ascorbic acid antifade needs to be prepared fresh each time, so only prepare a small amount
as needed.
1. Add 1 mL 1X PBS to a fresh 1.5 mL low protein binding nuclease free microcentrifuge tube.
2. Add 0.1 g ascorbic acid to the tube.
3. Mix thoroughly by vortexing until the ascorbic acid has dissolved completely.
4. Filter the mixture twice through 0.22 µm syringe filters.

22 Remove the sample from the heat block and add 2 µL of ascorbic acid antifade solution.
Pipette to mix.

23 Pipette 5 µL onto a clean, labeled, poly-L-lysine treated slide.

Note

1. Thoroughly clean slides with 70% ethanol and allow slides to dry completely.
2. Prepare a 10% polylysine solution by diluting Poly-L-Lysine 0.01% w/v 1:10 in autoclaved Nanopure water (18.2 MΩ) (using plastic pipette tips and a plastic container).
3. Soak slides in the polylysine solution in a plastic container for 5 minutes (increasing time will not improve performance). Ensure there are no air bubbles on the slides.
4. Dry slides in a drying oven at 60°C for one hour or overnight at room temperature.
5. Once dried, slides can be stored in a plastic slide box at room temperature until use.

24 Gently cover with a cover slide, avoiding creating air bubbles.

25 Image on a fluorescence microscope under FITC blue excitation light (495 nm) with a 100x oil stage.

Protocol references

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