

Isolation and characterization of a *Pseudomonas putida* bacteriophages
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Abstract

Two phage isolates for *Pseudomonas putida* were isolated from soil cultivated with potato by the enrichment culture technique and signed as PP₁ and PP₂. The phages were propagated and purified by polyethylene glycol, 6000-sodium dextran sulfate 500 two phase system. The two phages had different ultraviolet absorption spectra. Results of the lytic pattern of both phages showed that, they had a restricted host range. Particle morphology of the isolated phages was determined and it was found that the two viruses have tadpole shape, which phage PP₁ has an isometric head (135 nm) and long non-contractile tail (225 nm) whereas phage PP₂ has an isometric head (121 nm) and long contractile tail (202 nm), the tail possessing an outer sheath (135 nm) and neck (27 nm). Protein patterns of the isolated *Ps. putida* phages were analysed by SDS-PAGE and the data revealed that phage PP₁ had 16 structural proteins, 6 are known and the other are extrapolated, but phage PP₂ had 13 structural proteins 5 are known and the others are extrapolated. Both viruses have one molecule of the nucleic acid DNA with molecular weight of 2223 bp and 2559 bp for PP₁ and PP₂ respectively.

Key words : *Pseudomonas putida*, Phages, Isolation, Purification, Electron microscopy, SDS-PAGE, DNA, Lytic pattern.

Introduction

Genus *Pseudomonas* has tremendous importance and that, due to its widespread distribution in soil and its ability to utilize a wide range of organic substances as carbon or nitrogen sources. *Pseudomonas putida* is one of the saprophytic fluorescent *Pseudomonas* which comprise an important group of bacteria used for biological control of micro-fungi of the plant rhizosphere (Bergsma-Vlami *et al.*,

2002). *Pseudomonas putida* showed significant increase in germination percentage, growth of plants and phosphorus uptake of many plants (Alok-Sarma *et al.*, 2003).

Virulent bacteriophages play an important role in decreasing numbers of *Pseudomonas putida* in the soil and subsequently their role which reflects on the plants causing decreasing in yield.

Virulent viruses infecting *Pseudomonas* (*Pseudomonas* phages)

were isolated from different sources, i.e. plant leaves, seedlings, seeds (Miyajima, 1980), field free and rhizosphere soils (Kakutani *et al.*, 1994), and raw sewage (Thomas and Leary, 1983). Isolation of *Pseudomonas* phages almost, achieved by enrichment liquid method (Mosa *et al.*, 1996). The most effective method for concentrating and purifying of *Pseudomonas* phages as well as many bacteriophages can be done using polyethylene glycol, 6,000, differential centrifugation and 10-40% sucrose density gradient centrifugation (Tokarchuk *et al.*, 1975). *Pseudomonas* bacteriophages form different plaques ranging from small to large clear (Kakutani *et al.*, 1994). Some *Pseudomonas fluorescens* phages have an isometric icosahedral head and a short or long contractile or non contractile tail with different diameters (Keel *et al.*, 2002).

Many investigators studied *Pseudomonas* phage/host patterns and reported that phages attack their *Pseudomonas* strains with different degree of activities. The lytic activity of *Pseudomonas* phages is either specific in which the phage lysis only a single strain of *Pseudomonas* or polyvalent in which the phage lyses numerous strains of *Pseudomonas* (Mosa *et al.*, 1996).

Protein structure of *Pseudomonas* phages was determined by SDS-polyacrylamide gel electrophoresis, and it was found that,

bacteriophages differ between them in their protein patterns (Auling, 1978).

Because of the little knowledge about the bacteriophages specific for *Pseudomonas fluorescens* particularly *Pseudomonas putida* in the Egyptian soil. This investigation was planned to isolate, purify and characterize some phage isolates occur in the soil, depending upon the lytic pattern, electron microscopy, protein patterns and serology.

Materials and Methods

Source of bacteria:

Bacterial strains of *Ps. putida* and *Ps. fluorescens* were kindly obtained from Plant Pathology Dept., Fac. of Agric., Ain Shams Univ., Cairo, Egypt. They were grown on the King's medium (10.0 g peptone, 0.75 g K₂HPO₄, 0.75 g MgSO₄, 7.5 ml glycerol and 1.5% agar).

Isolation of bacteriophages :

Clay loamy and sandy soil samples were collected from, soil cultivated with potato plants at Qalubia Governorate (Farm of Fac. Agric. Shoubra El-Khima and Basos) and Sharkia Governorate (Dahshour). Phages were isolated using the enrichment culture technique Eayre *et al.* (1995) as follows :

Five g of each sieved soil sample, 0.01 of CaCO₃ and 5 ml broth cultures *Ps. spp.* (24 hr old) were added into 250 ml Erlenmeyer flasks containing 100 ml of King's medium.

After shake-culturing on a rotary shaker for 72 h at 30°C, the cultures were centrifuged at 6000 rpm for 15 min. Supernatants were decanted in test-tubes and mixed with chloroform (1:10 v/v), vortexed and centrifuged for 15 min at 6000 rpm. The resulting upper phase supernatants (crude phage lysates) were separated from the chloroform, and stored in sterile vials at 4°C.

Assaying of bacteriophages:

Qualitative and quantitative assaying of the isolated two phages were carried out using the spot test and double layer agar plate methods. The phages presumptively responsible for the plaques were purified by three times of single plaque isolation (Tanaka *et al.* 1990), to obtain a single purified plaque type.

Propagation and purification:

Phage lysate of each isolated phage was propagated according to Tanaka *et al.* (1990) to prepare high titre suspension of the phage.

The propagated high titre phage stock was purified and concentrated according to Othman (1997) by sedimentation by polyethylene glycol (PEG 6000), dextran sulphate two phase system 65.0, 2.0 and 17.0 g of PEG, sodium dextran sulfate and NaCl) were added to 1000 ml phage lysate in separating funnel and mixed well, then left to stand for overnight at 4°C.

The heavily turbid bottom layer was collected slowly and centrifuged at 2000 rpm for 15 min. The clear top and bottom phase were removed and the remaining inter-phase layer was suspended in dextran sulphate. The mixture was allowed to stand and then centrifuged (at 6000 rpm for 15 min) and supernatant containing phages was collected followed by centrifugation at 15000 rpm for 2 h. The pellets were re-suspended in saline solution and dialyzed against NaCl solution (0.85%) for 48 hr.

Determination of phage particle morphology:

Phage suspension (10^8 pfu/ml) were negatively stained with 4% uranyl acetate and examined with transmission electron microscope (Beckman 1010) operated at 60 KV at the Regional Centre for Mycology and Biotechnology, El-Azhar University, Cairo, Egypt. Electron micrographs were taken and phage dimensions were measured.

Ultraviolet extinction spectra of purified phages :

Purified phage preparations were diluted to 100-fold and measured at range of 230 to 300 nm. ultraviolet waves (Unico - UV - 2100 spectrophotometer) MIRCEN, Faculty of Agriculture, Ain Shams University, in order to determine the optical properties, evaluate purity and yield of the purified phages.

Lytic pattern of *Ps. putida* phages :

Two bacteriophage isolates of *Ps. putida* were tested against 7 bacterial *Ps. putida* and *Ps. fluorescens* isolates illustrated in Table (1) obtained from the Department of Microbiology, Faculty of Agriculture, Ain Shams University.

Tasted bacteria were suspended in King's medium to a density of about 10^8 cfu/ml. Aliquot (0.5 ml) of suspension of each bacterial isolate was mixed with 2 ml melted medium (0.8% agar) and then overlaid on plates of king's solid medium.

Twenty ul of phage suspension were spotted on the agar overlays and the plates were incubated at 30°C overnight. Clear confluent lysis or turbid confluent lysis were recorded as positive reaction, while extremely faint zones were considered negative reaction, according to Eayre *et al.* (1995).

Protein patterns of phages :

Proteins of phage particle were fractionated by SDS-PAGE described by Laemmli (1970), slab gels were formed between two glass plates (16 x 16 cm separated by 1.0 mm thick Teflon spacers). Gels were formed with 12% separating gel and a 4% stacking gel. After complete polymerization, the comb was removed and aliquots of 50 ul of the purified phage preparations were dissociated by heating for 5 to 10 min. in 50 ul of Laemmli buffer containing 2-mercaptoethanol protein samples and protein markers

were electrophoresed at 200volt (25 mA) for 3-5 h.

The molecular weights of capsid proteins were estimated by comparison with those of protein markers with molecular wt (116.0, 66.2, 45.0, 35.0, 25.0, 18.4 and 14.4 KDa). Gels were stained overnight in 200 ml of 0.1% comassie brilliant blue R250 and destained according to Hames and Rihichwood (1985). Data were obtained by gel documintation quantity 1 (Bio-Rad).

Analysis of phage nucleic acid :

DNA nucleic acid of phages was separated according to the method of Mayer *et al.* (1973) with slight modification of Maniatis *et al.* (1982). The nucleic acid extraction was carried out with phenol saturated with TE buffer (10 mM tris-HCl (pH 8.0), 1 mM EDTA). The agarose gel electrophoresis was carried out using the tris-borate EDTA buffer (TBE) (Peacock and Bingman, 1968). Electrophoresis was carried out at 60 Volts for 3h, the gel was stained in 1 ug/ml of ethidium bromide for 30 min. (Dillon *et al.*, 1985). The stained gels were examined using an ultraviolet lamb and the DNA molecular weights were estimated by comparison with those of DNA markers with molecular weight (1, 517, 1,200, 1,000, 900, 800, 700, 600, 500, 400, 200 and 100 bp.). Data were obtained by gel documintation quality 1 (Bio-Rad).

Results and Discussion

Isolation and characterization of two phage isolates of *Ps. putida* isolated from the clay loamy soil cultivated with potato plants (Farm of Fac. Agric., Ain Shams Univ. Shoubra El-Khaima, Qalubia) which was the only one that give positive for phage isolation. In contrast, no phages were isolated from other types of soil. Phages were isolated by enrichment culture technique and phages were designated as PP₁ and PP₂. Numerous studies document that phages capable of infecting fluorescent Pseudomonads can be isolated from different environments (Ackermann, 2001; Jensen *et al.*, 1998; Erkan and Saygl, 1987; Mosa *et al.*, 1996 and Park *et al.*, 2000).

From the plates derived from the overlayer assaying technique and containing the different morphological characters plaques. A plaque of each isolates was picked up and used for preparing purified phage lysate by single plaque isolation method. After repeating the technique three times, the purified phage lysate was propagated to obtain large scale production of the phages specific for *Ps. putida* to use in purification procedure. Mosa *et al.* (1996) used enrichment culture technique for *Ps. solanacearum* phage isolation; Park *et al.* (2000) used also the enrichment method for isolation of phages of *Pseudomonas plecoglossicida*,

The two phage isolates produced different types of plaques, PP₁ isolate produced circular, clear plaque (2 mm in diameter) without a halo while PP₂ isolate produced a circular plaques with central clear area surrounded by opaque area forming a halo, with 7.0 mm in diameter.

Propagation and purification of *Ps. putida* phages:

A large amount (1000 ml) with high titer of phage lysates (PP₁ and PP₂) was prepared using liquid culture technique. The titer of the propagated phages was 1.6×10^{12} and 1.1×10^{12} for PP₁ and PP₂ respectively.

Polyethylene glycol dextran sulfate two phase system was used to obtain partial purified phage preparations. Twenty three ml for PP₁ and twenty eight ml for PP₂ phage of turbid phase were collected from separating funnel after precipitation with PEG (Fig. 1A) and about 2 ml of the intermediate phase (cake) were collected after centrifugation of the turbid phase (Fig. 1B). Intermediate phases were obtained and centrifuged at 3000 rpm for 30 minutes, then the supernatant was centrifuged at 15.000 rpm for 120 min. The pellets were resuspended in saline solution and dialyzed against NaCl solution (0.85%).

Investigators usually prepare high titer phage lysates either from plates demonstrating confluent lysis

(Greer, 1982) or by liquid enrichment cultures (Othman, 1997). Purification of some phages was accomplished using a two-phase water soluble polymer system by polyethylene glycol, 600 (4%) and

sodium dextran sulfate, 500 (0.22%) followed by differential centrifugation (Hu' *et al.*, 1981; Othman *et al.*, 2004 and Thomas and Leary, 1983).

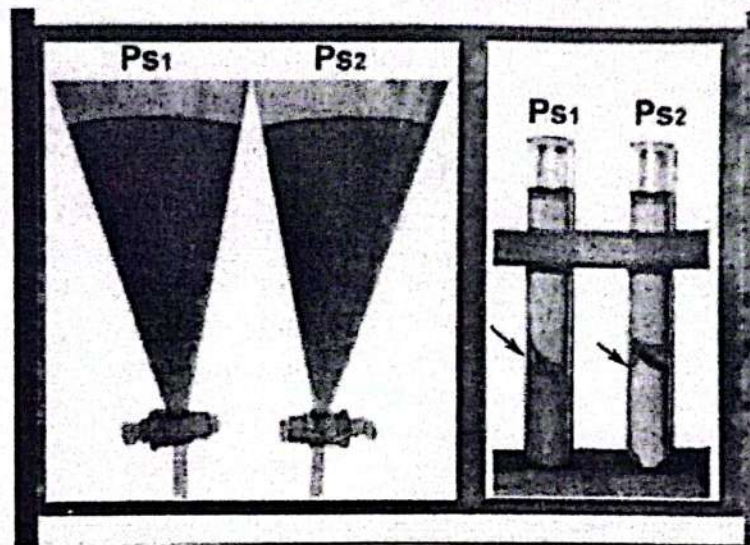


Fig. (1): Separating funnel containing viruses PP_1 and PP_2 in turbid bottom after precipitation (A) and intermediate phase containing viruses PP_1 and PP_2 after centrifugation of the turbid phase (B).

Characterization of phage particles :

Morphological properties of the isolated phages :

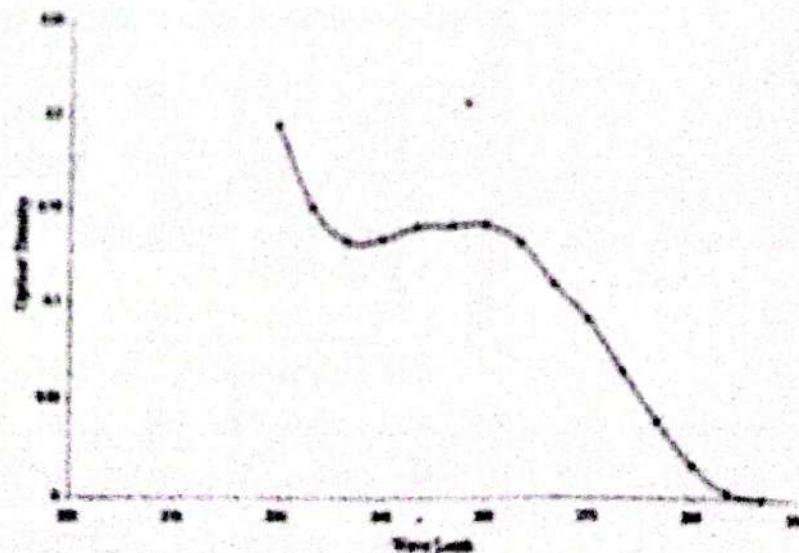
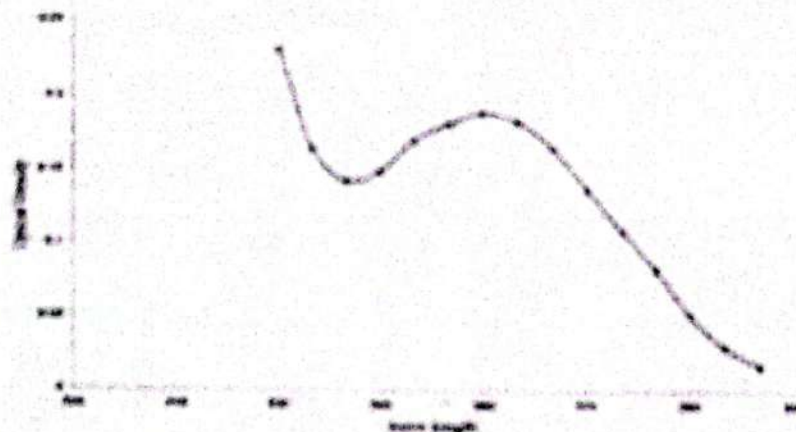
The particle morphology of the isolated phages PP_1 and PP_2 was determined by examination of the negatively stained preparations loaded onto carbon coated copper grids. Fields in the electron microscope screen were repeated many times to confirm the homogeneity of the preparations and/or the presence of more than view or identity. Electron micrographs (Fig. 2A and

B) showed that, the two viruses have tadpole shape PP_1 virus with isometric head (135 nm in diameter) and long non-contractile tail (225 nm) whereas, PP_2 virus having isometric head (121 nm) and long contractile tail (202.9 nm), the tail posing an outer sheath (135 nm) and neck (27 nm). The phage PP_1 can be classified as member of siphoviridae family, while phage PP_2 can be classified as member of styloviridae family. Miyajama (1980) examined phages of *Pseudomonas fuscovaginae* and found that, the all phage

A_{max}/A_{min} was 1.075. The absorption curves of protein and nucleic acid give rise to conclusions that the ratio A_{260}/A_{280} will be higher with viruses containing more protein and A_{max}/A_{min} will be higher with viruses containing more nucleic acid.

Therefore, phage PP₁ had protein content more than phage PP₂ because A_{260}/A_{280} of PP₁ less than (1.72) that of PP₂ (2.15), and it had nucleic acid content less than PP₂ because the ratio A_{max}/A_{min} of PP₁ (0.76) less than that of PP₂ (1.075).

A



B

Fig. (3): U.V. absorption spectrum of *Pseudomonas* phage PP₁ (A) and *Pseudomonas* phage PP₂ (B).

Protein patterns of *Pseudomonas* phages :

SDS-PAGE has been more widely used to compare structural differences between virus strains (Maillard *et al.*, 1996).

The molecular weight of the proteins of PP₁ and PP₂ were determined comparing with marker proteins. As shown in Fig. (4), *Pseudomonas putida* PP₁ virus had 16 structural proteins with molecular weights known and extrapolated of 112.41, 86.78, 84.18, 72.29, 65.60, 55.96, 42.87, 36.84, 33.56, 29.21, 23.55, 17.48, 7.03, 5.92, 2.78 and 1.73 KDa while *Pseudomonas putida* Pp₂ virus had 13 structural proteins with molecular weights known and extrapolated of 117.66, 113.38, 83.38, 65.60, 57.11, 42.87, 34.19, 28.72, 23.55, 17.48, 7.94, 6.60 and 3.23 KDa. Data also showed that there were four known structural protein presented in the two phages with molecular weights of 65.60, 42.87, 23.55 and 17.48 KDa. Data also indicated that the two phage isolates PP₁ and PP₂ differed quantitatively and qualitatively in their structural proteins and they are considered according to these two phages. Auling (1978) reported that *Pseudomonas pseudofalva* temperate

phages give 5 major & 10 minor bands when their proteins were determined by SDS-PAGE, the molecular weight of proteins ranged from 6.5 to 145 KDa.

Electrophoresis of DNA of *Pseudomonas putida* viruses :

The purified preparations of nucleic acid of PP₁ and PP₂ (*Pseudomonas putida*) viruses were electrophoresed (1%) by agarose slab gel. Fig. (5), Illustrates that there is one molecule in each phage, comparing with marker DNA. The molecular weight of Ps₁ and Ps₂ viruses were 2223.885 and 2559.069 bp. Respectively.

Thomas and Leary (1983) reported that either the nucleic acid was RNA or DNA and whether it is single or double stranded, they were determined by acrylamid gel electrophoresis and enzyme digestion. They determined the molecular wt of 20 *Pseudomonas syringae* pv. *glycinea* bacteriophages, they were double stranded DNA with molecular weights varying from 5.6 to 8.0 x 10⁶ bp by comparison with standards also Keel *et al.*, 2002 reported also that the genome size of *P. fluorescens* strain CNAO was approximately 50 kbp.

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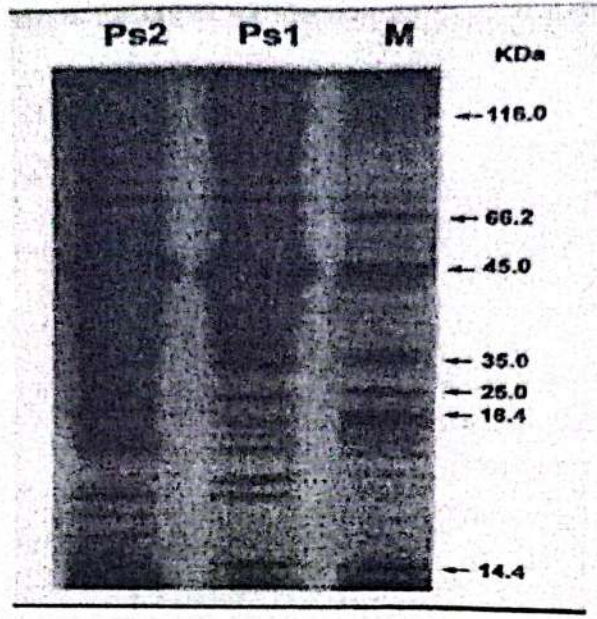


Fig. (4): Protein patterns of *Pseudomonas* viruses (PP₁ and PP₂) as determined by 12% SDS-PAGE.

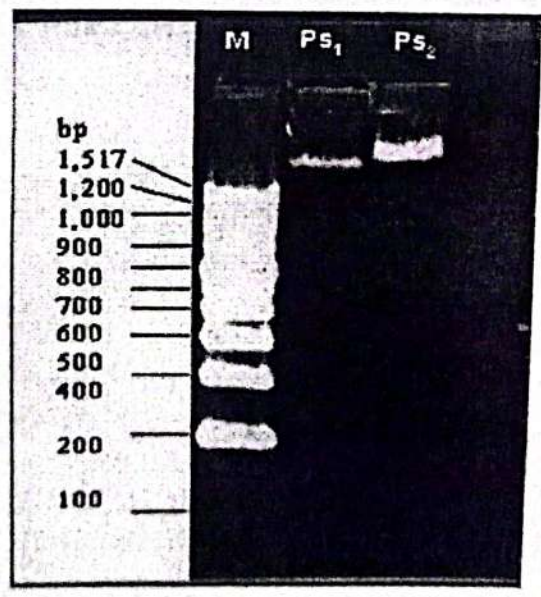


Fig. (5): Molecular weight of the PP₁ and PP₂ genome viruses, as determined on 1% agarose gel electrophoresis.
- Lane 1 PP₁ genome; - Lane 2 PP₂ genome; - Lane M marker DNA.

Lytic patterns of *Pseudomonas* phages :

Pseudomonas phages have been purified and their infectivity on various *Pseudomonas* host strains is being studied qualitatively by the spot test technique. Data represented in Table (2) showed that *Pseudomonas* phages PP₁ and PP₂ have a host range restricted to three or four of the 7 tested strains respectively. The two isolates of *Pseudomonas* phages differ in their reaction with the bacterial host strains, as Pp₁ caused lysis to four strains (Pf8, 50, Pfl, and Ps₄ while phage PP₂ reacted positively with three isolates (Pf8, 50, and Pfl). Many investigators studied the

Pseudomonas phages host patterns and reported that phages attack their *Pseudomonas* strains with different degrees of activity Kropinaki and Warren (1970) reported that the lytic bacteriophage QW-14 specific for *Pseudomonas acidovorans* showed limited host range, lysing only four of seven different strains. While Aria and Uehara (1982) reported that phi phage of *Ps. syringae* attacked 18 isolates of *Ps. syringae*. The lytic activity of *Pseudomonas* phages is either specific in which phage lysis only a single strain of *Pseudomonas* or polyvalent in which the phage lyses numerous strains of *Pseudomonas*.

Table (2): Lytic pattern of the isolated phases specific for *Pseudomonas putida*.

	Indicator bacteria	Spot test results*	
		Phage PP ₁	Phage PP ₂
1	<i>Pseudomonas putida</i> PF1	+	+
2	<i>Pseudomonas putida</i> 50	+	+
3	<i>Pseudomonas putida</i> P55	-	-
4	<i>Pseudomonas putida</i> PP	-	-
5	<i>Pseudomonas fluorescence</i> B	±	±
6	<i>Pseudomonas fluorescence</i> PS4	+	-
7	<i>Pseudomonas fluorescence</i>	-	-

* Result of three replicates for each treatment.

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عزل وتوصيف بكتريوفاجات بسيدوموناس بيوتيدا

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- 2 - قسم الميكروبيولوجيا الزراعية ، كلية الزراعة ، جامعة عين شمس ، شبرا الخيمة ، مصر
- 3 - قسم النبات والميكروبيولوجي ، كلية العلوم ، جامعة الأزهر فرع بنات ، القاهرة ، مصر

من تربة زراعية منزوعة بطاطس تم عزل إثنين من البكتريوفاجات سميًا PP₁ و PP₂ ثم أجريت لهما عملية إكثار في مزارع مقواه سائلة وأتبعت بإجراء تقنية للفيروسات (البكتريوفاجات) بنظام الطبقتين السائلتين في وجود البولى إيثيلين جليكول والديكستران سلفات.

درست خواص الفاجات وأوضحت النتائج المتحصل عليها أن للفاجين خواص إحصائية للأشعة فوق بنفسجية مختلفة ولكليهما مجال عوائل ضيق ومحدود لسلاسل النوع بيوتيدا . أوضح الفحص بالميكروسكوب الإلكتروني أن الشكل الظاهري للفاجين يشبه شكل فرخ الضفدع ، حيث يمتلك فاج PP₁ رأساً أيزومترية قطرها حوالي 135 نانوميتر وذيلاً طويلاً غير منضغط بطول 225 نانوميتر ، في حين يمتلك فاج PP₂ رأساً أيزومترية قطرها 121 نانوميتر وذيلاً طويلاً منضغطاً طوله 202 نانوميتر ويغطي الذيل غلافاً خارجياً قابلاً للإضغاط طوله 135 نانوميتر .

لوضحت تحليلات البروتينات باستخدام الـ SDS-PAGE أن الفاجين مختلفين في أعداد البروتينات التركيبية حيث يمتلك فاج PP₁ (بناء على برامج التحليل بالحاسب الآلى للجل) على ستة عشر نوعاً من بينهم ستة أنواع معلومة الوزن الجزيئى والباقي متوقع الوزن الجزيئى ، ويمتلك فاج PP₂ ثلاثة عشر نوعاً من بينهم خمسة أنواع معلومة الوزن الجزيئى والباقي متوقع الوزن الجزيئى . أستخلص الحامض النووى للفاجين و قدر الوزن الجزيئى للحامض وبينت النتائج أن كل فيروس يحتوى على جزيء واحد من الحامض إلا أنهما يختلفان فى وزنهما الجزيئى حيث جاء للوزن ألفين ومائتين ثلاثة وعشرين زود قاعدة ألفين وخمسمائة تسعة وخمسين زوج قاعدة للفاجين على التوالي .