

PERMANENT GENETIC RESOURCES

Characterization of polymorphic microsatellite markers in the Dalmatian wall lizard *Podarcis melisellensis* (Squamata: Lacertidae)

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Abstract

We describe polymerase chain reaction primers and amplification conditions for 13 highly polymorphic microsatellite DNA loci isolated from the Dalmatian wall lizard, *Podarcis melisellensis*. The number of alleles per locus ranged from 12 to 41, with levels of observed heterozygosity between 0.62 and 0.94. Most of these loci were successfully cross-amplified in the closely related species *P. sicula*, but levels of polymorphism were always lower.

Keywords: cross-species amplification, Lacertidae, microsatellites, *Podarcis melisellensis*, *Podarcis sicula*

Received 22 July 2008; revision accepted 22 August 2008

The Dalmatian wall lizard, *Podarcis melisellensis* (Braun, 1877), is a small lizard (average snout-vent length ♂♂: 65.42 mm; ♀♀: 57.01; Brecko *et al.* 2008), endemic to the Adriatic coast and many of the islands in the Adriatic Sea. Individuals have one of three different ventral colours: bright white, yellow or orange (Huyghe *et al.* 2007). As part of an ongoing study about the origin and maintenance of this colour polymorphism, we developed a series of polymerase chain reaction (PCR) primers to screen microsatellite DNA loci which may be useful for assessing intraspecific population genetic variation, individual relatedness, and parentage. Through cross-species amplification in the closely related species *P. sicula* (Rafinesque, 1810), these microsatellites may also help to uncover alleged interspecific hybridization between both species.

Genomic DNA used for the isolation of microsatellite loci was extracted from a 2-mm tail tip tissue sample, using a standard protocol (QIAGEN DNA mini kit). DNA samples for the PCRs were extracted using a modified Chelex extraction protocol (adapted from R. J. Nelson, Institute of Ocean Sciences, personal communication; Small *et al.* 1998; Savannah River Ecology Laboratory Journal of Undergraduate Research 2005). A Chelex extraction buffer made with 10%

Chelex (Bio-Rad), 0.1% SDS and 0.1% of 20 mg/mL Proteinase K was pipetted on the tissue samples, which were then incubated for 60 min at 65 °C and 15 min at 95 °C. Isolation of microsatellite loci was done by the VIB DNA core facility at the University of Antwerp. Briefly, the protocol used was as follows. A TOPO shotgun subcloning kit (Invitrogen) was used to construct a genomic library according to the manufacturer's instructions. Recombinant colonies were screened with (CA)₂₀, (GA)₂₀, (TAA)₁₀, and (CAA)₁₀ oligonucleotide probes that were ³²P radioactively end-labelled using a T4 polynucleotide kit (Invitrogen). Hybridization was performed overnight in a church buffer at 50 °C. Subsequent washing took place in 5× SSC, 15 min at room temperature, and 15 min at 50 °C. Positive clones were sequenced with M13 forward and M13 reverse vector primers. Sputnik (Espresso Software Development) was used to identify short tandem repeats, utilizing a recursive algorithm to search for 2–5 base repeated patterns of nucleotides. Using these sequences, we designed 20 primers using the program Primer3 (freely available at <http://frodo.wi.mit.edu/>). Forward primers were fluorescently labelled (6FAM dye: Sigma, and VIC, PET, NED dye: Applied Biosystems). Primers were tested for polymorphism on 100 individuals originating from a population of *P. melisellensis* of the island Lastovo (Croatia). *P. sicula* individuals (*N* = 23) for testing cross-amplification were caught on the nearby islet Pod Kopiste.

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Table 1 Characterization of 13 polymorphic microsatellite loci isolated from *Podarcis melisellenis*

Locus	Primer sequence (5'-3')	Multiplex	T _a (°C)	Repeat motif	Cloned allele size (bp)	A	Size range (amplified allele)	H _O	H _E	HWE	n	Null allele frequencies	GenBank Accession no.
Pmeli-02	F: 6FAM-TTCRAAGTCTGATTCACCTCCAA R: AGCTGCAAGCACCTFAGCAAT	1	60	(TG) ₈ (AG) ₁₀	727	40	139–223	0.78	0.96	P < 0.001	97	0.090	EU869334
Pmeli-04	F: VIC-GGGGAAGTGTCTGTGGTCTA R: AGCGAGCAAAATCCCTAAT	1	60	(TC) ₂₄	816	28	134–228	0.85	0.95	P < 0.001	94	0.051	EU869323
Pmeli-05	F: VIC-AGCCATCTACGGCTCTTTCA R: GGGACCCCAAAATGAGAAA	5	60	(TG) ₈	870	15	227–257	0.79	0.83	P = 0.14	100	N/A	EU869322
Pmeli-07	F: PEF-AGTAACCCCTTCGGCACIT R: AGGATGAACACCTGCCAAT	1	60	(AC) ₁₈	1027	13	202–228	0.77	0.89	P = 0.001	97	0.062	EU869324
Pmeli-08	F: 6FAM-ATGCTCCACCTGTCATCTC R: TGATTGGCACCACTGGAT TA	3	59	(TG) ₁₈ (AG) ₂₂	623	22	158–224	0.91	0.93	P = 0.23	99	N/A	EU869325
Pmeli-10	F: NED-AGCTGTTGGGGTTGAGTTG R: TGTAGATGCAGCCAAAGCAG	4	50	(TG) ₁₆	541	13	185–214	0.76	0.81	P = 0.11	100	N/A	EU869326
Pmeli-11	F: NED-ACGAAAACCCITTCGICT R: CCTGCTTGGTGAAGAAAA	3	59	(CA) ₁₄	623	12	175–205	0.73	0.74	P = 0.52	99	N/A	EU869327
Pmeli-13	F: VIC-AAATTAGCTCCCCCTTCTCC R: GAGCCGCCCTAGACAAAAG	2	57	(AC) ₂₂	254	17	186–211	0.86	0.84	P = 0.81	100	N/A	EU869328
Pmeli-14	F: 6FAM-GCTGTGCTTCTGGTCAIT R: CAGCAGTTCATGTTCTCTG	2	57	(AG) ₂₃	372	25	139–188	0.94	0.94	P = 0.54	100	N/A	EU869329
Pmeli-15	F: VIC-CCCTTTTGCAACACAGTTCA R: CTGGCTTACAGTGGCAACA	3	59	(GT) ₁₈	506	14	118–149	0.76	0.79	P = 0.23	100	N/A	EU869330
Pmeli-16	F: 6FAM-GACGGGGTTAGGAAGAAG R: GAGCCTCTGGAAAGATGTTG	4	50	(AC) ₈	388	28	97–249	0.79	0.94	P < 0.001	99	0.070	EU869331
Pmeli-18	F: 6FAM-TGGGTTATTGTTGAGGCTGT R: CCTGCACCTTGAATTGAGC	5	60	(TC) ₁₇	1025	29	193–255	0.62	0.94	P < 0.001	89	0.16	EU869332
Pmeli-19	F: PEF-FTGGAGAGCTTTTGAACC R: GCAGATGACAAAGCAATAGCC	2	57	(GC) ₃ (AC) ₁₀	625	41	157–241	0.77	0.97	P < 0.001	96	0.15	EU869333

T_a, annealing temperature; A, observed number of alleles; Size range in bp; H_O, observed heterozygosity; H_E, expected heterozygosity; HWE, Hardy-Weinberg probability; n, number of individuals.

Multiplex PCR amplifications were performed in a 12.5 µL reaction volume containing 1.5 µL of template DNA, 100× primer mix containing each primer at 0.02 µM, 4× QIAGEN multiplex PCR master mix (QIAGEN), and 3× RNase free H₂O. Amplification entailed an initial denaturation step of 15 min at 95 °C, followed by 30 cycles of 30 s denaturation at 95 °C, 90 s of annealing at loci-specific temperatures (Table 1), and 60 s of extension at 72 °C. After the last cycle, a final extension was done at 60 °C for 30 min. PCR conditions were optimized using a gradient thermal cycler (TGradient, Biometra), and after elimination of poorly amplifying loci, two or three primers with similar optimal temperatures were combined in five multiplex PCRs (Table 1). Finally, 13 loci were genotyped in 100 individuals of *P. melisellensis*. For fluorescent detection on an AB3130 XL Genetic Analyser, PCR products were mixed with formamide and an internal size standard (500Liz, GeneScan). The size of the PCR products was determined using the GeneMapper version 4.0 software program (Applied Biosystems).

In *P. melisellensis*, all 13 loci were polymorphic with allele numbers ranging from 12 to 41. Observed (H_O) and expected (H_E) heterozygosities were estimated, and tests for Hardy–Weinberg equilibrium (HWE) were conducted with *FSTAT* version 2.9.3 (Goudet 1995). Null allele frequencies were obtained for loci not in HWE (Table 1) and evidence for genotypic linkage disequilibrium was tested using GenePop version 3.3 (Raymond & Rousset 1995). H_O values ranged from 0.62 to 0.95, and were consistently lower than H_E (range: 0.74–0.97). HWE was rejected for six loci after sequential Bonferroni correction (corrected alpha = 0.0038) (Table 1). The higher allelic variation at these loci (mean: 29.83 alleles) compared to HWE loci (mean: 16.86 alleles; $F_{1,11} = 9.04$; $P = 0.012$) suggests that insufficient sampling might explain the HWE deviations at these loci. The proportion of samples that did not amplify also differed between loci in HWE (mean: 0.43 samples) and loci not in HWE (mean: 4.67 samples; $F_{1,11} = 10.12$; $P = 0.009$), suggesting the presence of null alleles in the latter. However, null allele frequencies were low (all $P < 0.16$) for all non-HWE loci, and therefore, should not have a significant impact on, e.g. parentage analyses (Dakin & Avise 2004). There was no evidence for linkage disequilibrium among our loci (data not shown).

Cross-species amplification was attempted in 23 individuals of *P. sicula*. Although most loci yielded consistent amplification products (nine out of 13 loci) using the same PCR conditions described above, levels of polymorphism were very low compared to those of *P. melisellensis*, with allele numbers ranging from two to six only (Table 2). However, none of the loci showed HWE deviations after sequential Bonferroni correction. For several loci, *P. sicula* showed alleles not appearing in *P. melisellensis* (one to three alleles in six loci), suggesting that this primer set could be useful in other *Podarcis* species.

Table 2 Cross-species amplification of microsatellite loci (*Podarcis sicula*). N/A no detectable PCR product

Locus	A	Size range (amplified allele)	H_O	H_E	HWE	n
Pmeli-02	4	131–181	0.74	0.73	$P = 0.63$	23
Pmeli-04	(0)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	(23)
Pmeli-05	(0)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	(23)
Pmeli-07	(0)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	(23)
Pmeli-08	4	165–182	0.36	0.60	$P = 0.02$	22
Pmeli-10	2	196–198	0.04	0.04	$P = 1.00$	23
Pmeli-11	(0)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	(23)
Pmeli-13	2	193–195	0.52	0.43	$P = 0.94$	23
Pmeli-14	6	132–158	0.74	0.71	$P = 0.70$	23
Pmeli-15	5	111–147	0.52	0.59	$P = 0.32$	23
Pmeli-16	3	179–190	0.74	0.63	$P = 0.92$	23
Pmeli-18	5	213–224	0.65	0.65	$P = 0.60$	23
Pmeli-19	5	177–202	0.78	0.71	$P = 0.85$	23

A, observed number of alleles; Size range in bp; H_O , observed heterozygosity; H_E , expected heterozygosity; HWE, Hardy–Weinberg probability; n, number of individuals.

Acknowledgements

This work was funded by an FWO-VI research grant G.0111.06, a research grant of the University of Antwerp (BOF), and the Joint Experimental Molecular Unit (JEMU). We are grateful to Hendrik van de Voorde (Vesalius Hogeschool Gent) for help in the laboratory. Samples were collected under permit no. 532-08-01/6-06-02 issued by the Croatian Ministry of Culture.

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