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A SIMPLE METHOD FOR THE EXTRACTION OF POLYSACCHARIDE B FROM BRUCELLA CELLS FOR USE IN THE RADIAL IMMUNODIFFUSION TEST DIAGNOSIS OF BOVINE BRUCELLOSIS

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It has been shown recently (Jones et al., 1980) that the use of a brucella polysaccharide antigen has made possible the identification of infected cattle in recently vaccinated herds which had high numbers of reactors to standard diagnostic test. A simple rapid radial immunodiffusion test developed by Diaz et al. (1979), and confirmed by Jones et al. (1980), has the potentiality of being more specific, and more economical to perform than other tests presently employed. The polysaccharide was obtained from rough B. melitensis 115 by trichloroacetic acid extraction and was designated polysaccharide B (Diaz and Levieux, 1972).

In the course of these studies two problems emerged:
1. The B. melitensis 115 strain was found to lose its ability to synthesize the polysaccharide B after repeated subculture and it was necessary to go back to the original dried strain.
2. The yield of polysaccharide B was low and the method somewhat cumbersome.

We knew the polysaccharide B was present in significant amounts along with smooth lipopolysaccharide (antigen A + M) in phenol-water extracts of smooth B. melitensis 16 M (Diaz et al., 1968). In the present communication we describe a simple method for the pre-
paration of the polysaccharide B from B. melitensis 16 M. The identity of the antigenic determinant of this preparation with the polysaccharide B obtained from B. melitensis 115 cells employed previously, is demonstrated by immunodiffusion test and its effectiveness in RID test with sera obtained from infected bovines is comparable to the original polysaccharide B.

Materials and Methods

Antigenic preparations

B. melitensis 16 M cells were grown in Trypticase Soy Broth (BBL) flasks at 37 °C on a rotatory shaker. After 48 h of incubation the cells were killed by addition of 90 % phenol up to a final concentration of 0.5 % and incubation at 37 °C for 24 h. Repeated experiments showed that no viable cells are found in the flasks after this treatment. The phenol killed cells were harvested by centrifugation at 5 °C using a Lourdes « Betafuge » model A Centrifuge, equipped with a 3 RA rotor, at 12 000 × g for 30 min, washed twice with saline and resuspended in distilled water (30 g of packed cells in 100 ml of water). The resuspended cells were autoclaved at 120 °C for 30 min, cooled and centrifuged at 12 000 g for 30 min at 5 °C. The supernatant fluid was removed, mixed with three volumes of cold ethanol and held at 5 °C for 18 h with continuous stirring. The precipitate formed (first precipitate) was pelleted by centrifugation (5 000 g for 15 min at 5 °C) dissolved in distilled water, dialyzed and freeze-dried. To the supernatant of this first precipitation two volumes of cold ethanol were added and the mixture kept at -20 °C overnight. The resulting precipitate (second precipitate) was collected by centrifugation (5 000 g for 15 min), dissolved in water, dialyzed and freeze-dried. The yield was about 5 % for the first precipitate and 1.5 % for the second precipitate referred to the weight of the dry cells. Polysaccharide B from B. melitensis 115 was prepared by trichloroacetic acid extraction as described previously (Diaz et al., 1979) (The yield of this method was about 0.5 %). Fraction 5 of Redfearn was prepared from B. melitensis 16 M by the modified phenol-water extraction method (Redfearn, 1960). The Fraction 5 contains both the lipo-polysaccharide (antigen A + M) and the polysaccharide B (Diaz et al., 1968).

Sero%gical methods

Radial immunodiffusion and double immunodiffusion in agarose gels were performed as described previously (Diaz et al., 1979). Tube seroagglutination (SAT) was performed as recommended by Alton and Jones (1967). Complement fixation (CF) titers of the sera used were kindly provided by Dr. E. Zarzuelo (Centro Regional de Brucelosis, Zaragoza, Spain) to whom sera are routinely sent for the official control of bovine Brucellosis.

Source of the sera

Bovine sera were obtained from cattle of the province of Navarra, Spain. For the present study we selected 231 sera from our collection

Fig. 1. — Gel diffusion of fraction 5 from B. melitensis 16 M (wells 1 and 4), polysaccharide B from B. melitensis (well 2) and second precipitate from B. melitensis 16 M reacted with sera from cattle infected with B. abortus.
previously shown to have antibodies to the polysaccharide B, by IDR using polysaccharide B from B. melitensis 115 (229 sera) or double immunodiffusion using the fraction 5 of Redfearn 

Milk culture

Milk samples, when available, were inoculated on the selective medium described by Renoux, following the procedures described previously by Alton and Jones (1967).

Results

The results of the double immunodiffusion analysis of the first precipitate, showed two components, one with total identity to the lipopolysaccharide (antigen A + M) of fraction 5 and the other with total identity to both the polysaccharide B present in the fraction 5 and the B. melitensis 115 polysaccharide B. In contrast with the first precipitate the second precipitate showed only one component. This component displayed total identity with either the polysaccharide B of fraction 5 and the B. melitensis 115 polysaccharide B (Fig. 1).

The second precipitate did not show other component by double immunodiffusion even at a concentration as high 20 mg/ml, although a concentration as low as 9 µg/ml was enough to develope the polysaccharide B line. In contrast, B. melitensis 115 polysaccharide B had to be used at concentrations of at least 320 µg/ml in the double immunodiffusion test. Similar results were obtained when the RID was used with individual sera placed in the wells. The optimal concentrations at which immunoprecipitate rings appeared within 3 h was 10 µg/ml of agaroase for the second precipitate and 200 µg/ml of agarase for the B. melitensis 115 polysaccharide B. For the second precipitate some sera gave positive results at a concentration as low as 2.5 µg/ml, but never at concentrations higher than 200 µg/ml.

Further comparisons among the antigens were performed with either the RID or the double immunodiffusion technique using 231 sera known to be positive to polysaccharide B by either the RID test with B. melitensis 115 polysaccharide B or Ouchterlony with fraction 5 from B. melitensis 115 polysaccharide B. The optimal concentrations of 10 µg/ml of the second precipitate and 200 µg/ml of the B. melitensis 115 polysaccharide B were used in the IDR. The fraction 5 preparation was used at 5 µg/ml in the double immunodiffusion test.

All but 10 sera gave identical results, i.e. all were positive for the B. melitensis 115 polysaccharide B, the second precipitate and both components of the fraction 5, the lipopolysaccharide (antigen A + M) and polysaccharide B. Table 1 shows the results obtained with the 10 sera previously cited. All the 10 sera gave the characteristic precipitation line with the second precipitate, eight with the B. melitensis 115 polysaccharide B and four with the polysaccharide B present in fraction 5. Noteworthy, sera n° 1 and n° 2 did not show antibodies to the lipopolysaccharide (antigen A + M) while they showed antibodies to the poly-

### Table 1. — Results of precipitation, SAT, CF tests and milk culture from ten cows giving different results in IDR and double gel diffusion.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Serum N°</th>
<th>IDR with poly B from B. melitensis</th>
<th>Double immunodiffusion with fraction 5 from B. melitensis 16 M</th>
<th>Tube agglutination titres (U.I.)</th>
<th>FC titre</th>
<th>Milk cultures</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>B. abortus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>Negative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>508</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>B. abortus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>Not done</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>B. abortus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>Not done</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>B. abortus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>B. abortus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>Not done</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>Not done</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
saccharide B. For those two sera the CF titers were indicative of an active infection and the milk culture was positive in an animal, but the SAT titer were of 16 UI suggesting no infection.

Discussion

On the basis of the evidence presented we conclude that the second precipitate seem to be immunologically indistinguishable with the B. melitensis 115 polysaccharide B and with the polysaccharide B present in the fraction 5 of Redfearn. We are not able to show any other component in the second precipitate by double immunodiffusion, but the possibility of the presence of other components has not been rigorously ruled out. Nevertheless, our results show that this preparation is, for diagnostic purposes, at least as good as the B. melitensis polysaccharide B used in previous work (Diaz et al., 1976; Diaz et al., 1979; Jones et al., 1980). The method described in the present communication for the preparation of polysaccharide B offers several advantages over the trichloroacetic acid extraction of B. melitensis 115 cells. First, B. melitensis 16 M is a reference strain easily kept in a stable form. Second, the method of extraction and differential precipitation is easy to perform, and it could be carried out in one laboratory equipped to handle pathogens. Since the B. melitensis 16 M is a pathogenic strain, precautions have to be taken during inoculation and growth of the cells, although the killing of the cells with phenol allows handling them subsequently without any risk. Third, for the optimal doses used in RID with the B. melitensis 16 M polysaccharide B preparation it is possible to study twenty times more animals than with the preparation of polysaccharide B from B. melitensis 115. In our laboratory with the polysaccharide B obtained, from 35 g of B. melitensis 16 M dry cells, we are able to study theoretically 52 500 sera in contrast to the 875 with the polysaccharide B obtained from B. melitensis 115 R.

A rather remarkable result was the finding of two sera that did not show antibodies to the lipopolysaccharide (antigen A + M) whereas they had antibodies to the polysaccharide B. These two sera had SAT titers of 16 IU but CF titers of 1/160. It is known that there is a correlation between the presence of antibodies to the lipopolysaccharide and SAT titers in both human and cow sera (Diaz et al., 1976; Panizo et al., 1978; McMahon et al., 1979). On the other hand Jones et al. (1980) have demonstrated that there is a correlation between CF titers and the ability of the sera to develop the polysaccharide B precipitation line. Altogether, these observations suggest that the polysaccharide B could play an important role in the CF test, and work must be done in order to confirm this hypothesis.

Summary

In order to extract the polysaccharide B of brucella used in Radial Immunodiffusion test (RID) for detection of infected cattle, a quick, simple and safe method is proposed. It consists of using phenol killed cells of B. melitensis 16 M known to produce polysaccharide B. After autoclaving brucella cells resuspended in saline, the cells are separated by centrifugation and the polysaccharide B is obtained by two successive ethanol precipitations of the supernatant. Comparison of the results of RID tests carried out with the polysaccharide extract of B. melitensis 16 M (rapid method) and 231 sera of infected cattle shows the validity of this method of preparation. Differences in yield (1.5 % for the second precipitate against 0.5 % for the polysaccharide-reference and in optimum dose used the reaction (10 μg against 200 μg) show that as many as 60 times more RID tests can be made with the polysaccharide obtained by rapid method.

References


