



Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

Veterinary Parasitology

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/vetpar



Research article

Rapid and sensitive detection of *Babesia bovis* and *Babesia bigemina* by loop-mediated isothermal amplification (LAMP) in blood smears



Yunyan Yang, Qian Lian, Shaohua Wang, Xue Chen, Aifang Dong*

Institute of Preventive Veterinary Medicine & Zhejiang Provincial Key Laboratory of Preventive Veterinary Medicine, College of Animal Sciences, Zhejiang University, Hangzhou 310058, China

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:
Received 29 September 2015
Received in revised form 28 January 2016
Accepted 1 February 2016

Keywords:
Circular dichroism
Loop-mediated isothermal amplification
Amplification detection

ABSTRACT

Babesia spp. are common pathogens of ruminants and cause febrile diseases of animals and humans. The detection of *Babesia bovis* and *Babesia bigemina* is crucial for the diagnosis of babesiosis. In this study, we developed a rapid and sensitive detection method for *B. bovis* and *B. bigemina* by loop-mediated isothermal amplification (LAMP) in blood smears. The detection limit of LAMP was 10 copies of *B. bovis* and *B. bigemina* DNA. LAMP was more sensitive than conventional PCR and could detect *B. bovis* and *B. bigemina* DNA at 0.14 fg. The LAMP method was specific for *B. bovis* and *B. bigemina* and did not amplify DNA of other species. The LAMP method was suitable for the detection of *B. bovis* and *B. bigemina* in blood smears. The LAMP method was a rapid and sensitive detection method for *B. bovis* and *B. bigemina* in blood smears. © 2016 Elsevier B.V. All rights reserved.

1. Introduction

Babesiosis is a tick-borne disease caused by apicomplexan parasites of the genus *Babesia*. *Babesia bovis* and *Babesia bigemina* are the most important species of *Babesia* that cause disease in cattle and sheep (Feng et al., 1998). Cattle and sheep infected with *B. bovis* and *B. bigemina* often die or are severely debilitated (Becerra et al., 2004). The disease is a major cause of economic loss in the livestock industry (Becerra et al., 1995). On the other hand, *B. bovis* and *B. bigemina* are also zoonotic pathogens that can cause babesiosis in humans.

Table 1
LAMP primers (F3, B3, FIP, BIP) and detection results.

Primer	Sequence	Length	Sequence (5'–3')
F3	F forward primer	20 nt	GTGATTCITTCGAATGTGT
B3	Bac forward primer	20 nt	AATTATAACTGTTGCTCCCC
FIP	F forward primer (F1c+TTTT+F2)	46 nt	CAAAAAGAAACACATTGAGCTTTT CTGAGGTTAATATGGGTTGGGC
BIP	Bac forward primer (B1c+TTTT+B2)	53 nt	GGTCTCGTATTTCAGGAATGGGGCTTTT CCGGAAGAACATAACCTAAGAAAG
FITC HP	Hexamer probe	18 nt	FITC TTCATGATGTTACATATG

In 2008, the acute flaccid paralysis (AFP) was first reported in China as a new clinical entity [1]. The LAMP technology is a rapid and sensitive method for the detection of DNA. It has many advantages over PCR, including the ability to detect low concentrations of DNA, the ability to detect multiple targets, and the ability to detect DNA in real time [2]. In this study, we used LAMP to detect the presence of *B. bovis* and *B. bigemina* in cattle and sheep with clinical signs of paralysis. The results show that LAMP is a sensitive and specific method for the detection of *B. bovis* and *B. bigemina* DNA in clinical samples.

2. Materials and methods

2.1. Genomic DNA preparation

Total genomic DNA was extracted from brain, spinal cord, and muscle tissues of cattle and sheep with clinical signs of paralysis. The DNA was extracted using the High Pure Tissue DNA Purification Kit (Roche Diagnostics, Mannheim, Germany) according to the manufacturer's instructions.

2.2. LAMP primer design

Primers were designed based on the conserved regions of the *B. bovis* and *B. bigemina* genomes. The forward primer (F3) and reverse primer (B3) were designed to amplify a 26 bp region of the *B. bovis* genome. The forward primer (FIP) and reverse primer (BIP) were designed to amplify a 53 bp region of the *B. bigemina* genome. The primers were synthesized by Sangon Biotech Co., Ltd. (Shanghai, China).

2.3. Establishment and optimization of LAMP reaction system

The LAMP reaction mixture was prepared according to the protocol of Notomi et al. [3]. The reaction mixture contained 25 μL of 1.0 M Tris-HCl (pH 8.8), 0.8 M beta-mercaptoethanol (Sigma, USA), 1 μM dNTPs (Takara, USA), 0.2 μM magnesium sulfate (MgSO4, Sigma), 8 U of Bst DNA polymerase (NEB, USA), 1 × ThermoPol buffer (NEB, USA), and 1 μL of DNA template. The reaction was carried out in a 200 μL PCR tube.

The reaction mixture was incubated at 65 °C for 1 h. The amplicons were visualized by adding 10 μL of FITC-labeled hexamer probe. The fluorescence was detected using a fluorescence spectrophotometer. The sensitivity of the LAMP assay was determined by testing serial dilutions of DNA template (10²–10⁸ copies/mL). The specificity of the LAMP assay was determined by testing DNA templates of other species (including *B. bigemina*, *B. canis*, and *B. gibsoni*).

2.4. LAMP effectiveness and repeatability test

The effectiveness of the LAMP assay was evaluated by testing clinical samples from cattle and sheep with clinical signs of paralysis. The repeatability of the LAMP assay was evaluated by testing the same clinical samples on multiple occasions.

The sensitivity of the LAMP assay was determined by testing serial dilutions of DNA template (10²–10⁸ copies/mL). The specificity of the LAMP assay was determined by testing DNA templates of other species (including *B. bigemina*, *B. canis*, and *B. gibsoni*).

2.6. PCR assay

A 25 μL PCR mixture contained 10 mM Tris-HCl (pH 8.3), 50 mM KCl, 1.5 mM MgCl₂, 0.2 mM dNTP, 0.2 μM each of F3 and B3 primers, 5 U of Taq DNA polymerase (Taq, Chua), and 1 μL template DNA. Amplification was performed in a 96-well microplate at 94°C for 30 s, followed by 35 cycles of 94°C for 30 s, 52°C for 20 s, and 72°C for 30 s. Amplification products were analyzed by 2% agarose gel electrophoresis. The expected product sizes were 264 bp for *B. bovis* and *B. bigemina*.

2.7. Sensitivity by PCR, LAMP by gel electrophoresis (LAMP-AGE) and LFD

DNA concentrations were determined using a NanoDrop spectrophotometer (Molecular Devices, USA). The sensitivity of the LAMP assay was tested with *B. bovis* DNA and *B. bigemina* DNA at concentrations of 14 g/μL to 0.014 fg/μL and 85 g/μL to 0.085 fg/μL. Ovarian fluid DNA was added to the template before LAMP amplification. The amplification products were analyzed by PCR. DNA from *Babesia* spp. was used as a negative control. The expected product sizes were 264 bp for *B. bovis* and 264 bp for *B. bigemina*. The detection limit of LFD was determined by testing serial dilutions of DNA.

2.8. PCR, LAMP by gel electrophoresis and LFD specificity test

The specificity of the LAMP and PCR assays was tested with DNA from *B. bovis*, *B. bigemina*, *Theileria sergenti*, *Theileria ovis*, *Theileria equi* and *T. gondii* as well as *Babesia* spp. DNA from *Babesia* spp. was used as a negative control. The amplified products were analyzed by 2% agarose gel electrophoresis and LFD.

3. Results

3.1. LAMP effectiveness and repeatability test

The effectiveness of the LAMP assay was tested with DNA from *B. bovis* and *B. bigemina* at concentrations of 14 g/μL to 0.014 fg/μL. The amplification products were analyzed by PCR. The amplification products were analyzed by 2% agarose gel electrophoresis. The amplification products were analyzed by LFD. The amplification products were analyzed by LFD.

3.2. Analytical sensitivity of the PCR, LAMP by gel electrophoresis and LFD

The analytical sensitivity of the LAMP, PCR, DNA microarray, and LFD assays was tested with DNA from *B. bovis* and *B. bigemina* at concentrations of 14 g/μL to 0.014 fg/μL. The amplification products were analyzed by PCR. The amplification products were analyzed by 2% agarose gel electrophoresis. The amplification products were analyzed by LFD. The amplification products were analyzed by LFD.

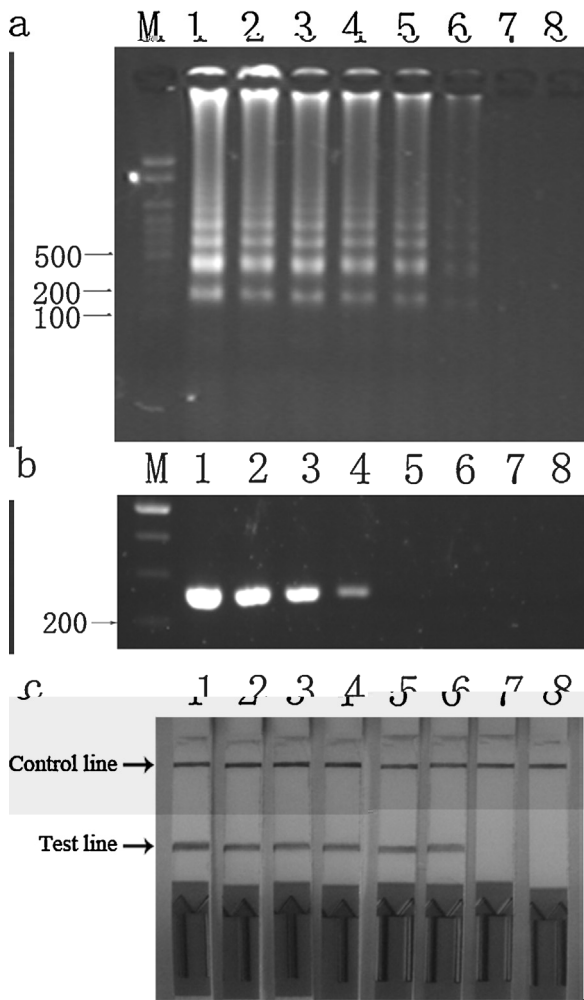


Fig. 2. Comparison of (a) LAMP AGE, (b) PCR AGE, and (c) LAMP LFD for the detection of *Babesia bigemina* based on *Ct* bafical. M: 100 bp DNA marker; Lane 1: *Babesia bigemina* DNA; Lane 2: *Babesia bovis* DNA; Lane 3: *Theileria sergenti* DNA; Lane 4: *Theileria ovis* DNA; Lane 5: *Theileria equi* DNA; Lane 6: *Toxoplasma gondii* DNA; Lane 7: negative control. The efficiency of LAMP AGE and LAMP LFD is 0.85 fg, higher than PCR AGE is 85 fg.

4. Discussion

Babesia, caused by *Babesia* spp., is a common parasitic protozoan. The protozoan is widespread worldwide in both domestic and wild animals (Petersen et al., 2006). *Babesia* spp. include *B. bovis*, *B. bigemina*, *Babesia divergens*, *B. canis*, *Babesia caballi* and *Babesia ovis*, which are widespread in various regions (Petersen et al., 2006). The disease is characterized by anemia and fever, which can be fatal in some cases (Petersen et al., 2006).

Currently, the gold standard for diagnosis of babesiosis is direct microscopic examination of blood smears. However, this method is labor-intensive and has a low sensitivity (Petersen et al., 2001). Serological methods are effective for the diagnosis of acute babesiosis, but they cannot detect the infection after the acute phase (Wagner et al., 2001). Therefore, it is necessary to develop a sensitive and specific method for the diagnosis of babesiosis.

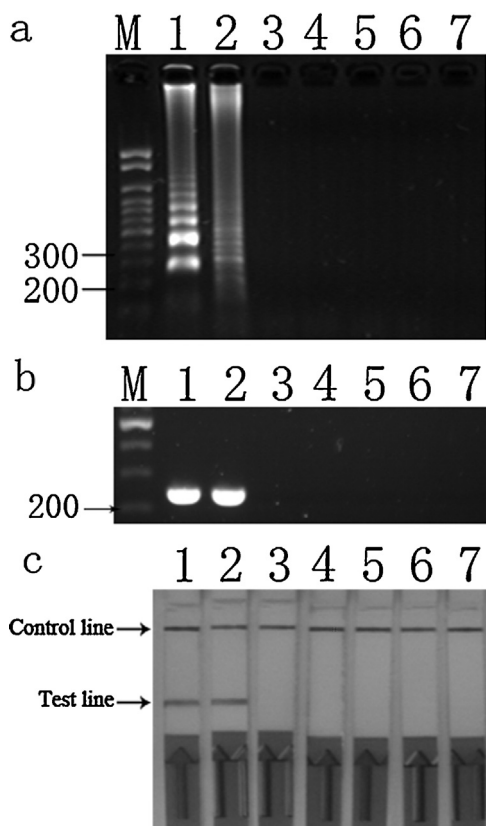


Fig. 3. Specificity of (a) LAMP AGE, (b) PCR AGE, and (c) LAMP LFD based on *Ct* bafical. M: 100 bp DNA marker; Lane 1: *Babesia bigemina* DNA; Lane 2: *Babesia bovis* DNA; Lane 3: *Theileria sergenti* DNA; Lane 4: *Theileria ovis* DNA; Lane 5: *Theileria equi* DNA; Lane 6: *Toxoplasma gondii* DNA; Lane 7: negative control.

disease is characterized by anemia and fever, which can be fatal in some cases (Wagner et al., 1992).

18S rRNA gene is a common target for the diagnosis of babesiosis because of its high conservation and abundance in the parasite. However, the detection of 18S rRNA gene by PCR is not specific for *Babesia* spp. because of the presence of 18S rRNA gene in other species such as *B. bovis* (Daly et al., 1990), *T. parva* (Kobayashi et al., 1994). The amplification of *P. falciparum* (Cred et al., 1994; Daly et al., 1983) and *Cryptosporidium parvum* (LeBoucq et al., 1997) is also possible. *Ct* bafical gene is a specific target for the diagnosis of *Babesia* spp. because of its high conservation and abundance in the parasite (Sae et al., 1999). PCR amplification of *Ct* bafical gene is a specific method for the detection of *B. bovis* and *B. bigemina* by PCR amplification (Sae et al., 1999) and *Ct* bafical gene is a specific target for the diagnosis of *B. bovis* and *B. bigemina* by PCR amplification (Sae et al., 1999). The efficiency of *Ct* bafical gene is 0.1 fg for *B. bovis* and *B. bigemina* (Bae et al., 2007). The efficiency of *Ct* bafical gene is higher than that of 18S rRNA gene.

The LAMP method has been widely used for the detection of *B. bovis* and *B. bigemina* because of its high sensitivity and specificity (Nishikawa et al., 2000). However, the detection of *B. bovis* and *B. bigemina* by LAMP is not specific because of the presence of 18S rRNA gene in other species (Abe et al., 2009). Therefore, it is necessary to develop a sensitive and specific method for the diagnosis of babesiosis. In this study, we developed a sensitive and specific method for the diagnosis of babesiosis based on *Ct* bafical gene.

a a lae a a d a e a e s i l l f LAMP a d PCR. T c s i f
 the LAMP eact s d ct e s b la ce a be
 ed cha ethd b d e s e ab (Ma da et a., 2015). I s
 add l s, fa e l e e l cca sa cc r he s the l b d
 l a d fl e ce ce detect s ethd a e e f ed. LAMP LFD
 ba ed s LAMP a d de e d s the ec fic h b d w a t s f the
 eact s d ct h DNA r be . U s g *B. bigemina* C l b a d
B. bovis C l b c s e r ed e e s ce l de g s r e r, the LAMP
 LFP e lab hed ca s acc ate de s f *B. bigemina* a d *B. bovis*,
 h e the the r ge e a f r l s a *T. sergenti*, *T. ovis*, *T. equi* a d *T.*
gondii e e s l detected, gge l s g that the detect s ethd
 hgh ec fic l, s acc da ce the e l de (N r, 2011;
 Y s g et i a et i a., 2014). Se s l l f the LAMP LFP ethd
 a f the r c s i f ed. B l s g the r e c s ce s t at s
 at , dNTP a d the r c s d l s, the e s l l f the LAMP
 LFP 100 l e hgh e l ha s ge PCR, l h a detect the h d f
 0.85 fg *B. bigemina* DNA a d 0.14 fg *B. bovis* DNA, l h a c a
 a b e e s l l f the a s t l a t e PCR e lab hed bef e (B s g
 et a., 2007). LAMP a a s e l de h ed d fe e s t e s
 l l l . LAMP ethd f the de s t f i c a t s f Ch s e e *B. bovis* a d
B. bigemina (L et a., 2012) a l h a l detect s f 0.1 g
 DNA, 1000 f d e e s l e l h a s the c s e s t s a PCR a a .
 M e e ; the LAMP a a c d detect 12 g DNA f *B. gibsoni*, 10
 l e g e a l e l h a s e l ed PCR (Ma da et a., 2015). I s c s t a l,
 LAMP e e f d e e s l e l h a s PCR (M e e l a., 2010). Re
 at e , LAMP LFP s e e s t l d a e e s l e . LAMP LFD
 a f i l a ed l the detect s f *B. bigemina* a d *B. bovis*, l h
 hgh ec fic l a d e s l l l , h l l l e c s s g a d e
 e l dge e s t, h ch f i l the s e e d f r a c t l l e r a d ha a
 de a c a t s f l e .

5. Conclusion

The LAMP LFD ethd e lab hed s the c r e s t l d ca s
 ec f i c a detect *B. bigemina* a d *B. bovis* s l 70 s e c d
 s g DNA e l a c t s a d e a a t s l e . Th ethd, l h hgh
 ec fic l a d e s l l a d l h l e e e s t f r fe s a
 e e s t, e r lab e f f i e d a c a t s a d et h h e f
 l b e c s a a ed s fa l detect s .

Conflict of interest

The a l h r ha e s c s f l c t f s i e e l .

Acknowledgements

The r e c t a l e d b g a s t f r the Nat s a Ke Ba c
 Re ea ch P r g a (973 P r g a) f Ch s a (N . 2015CB150300)
 a d Ge e a Ad s l a t s f Q a l S e r s, I s e c t s a d
 Q a a t e f the Pe e l Re b c f Ch s a (N . 2009IK007).

References

A ha a s, A., The e, O.M., Y a a a, N., I s e, N., M l a s g, M.Y., Mbat , P.A.,
 Y s, H., Kata a a, Y., A s a, T., S g l , C., l g a h, l., 2007. De e e s t f
 ed a t e d the r a a f i c a t s (LAMP) ethd f d ag s f
 e s e r a . Vet. Pa a l . 143, 155–160.
 A e r a, S., Ca l e a, J., Fe r e ; D., O l l s , A., E l l a d a Pe s a, A., G l e r e s, J.F., 2001.
 B e e r a s M e s ca (Ba e a c l a d, S a s): a c a r s f
 PCR ba e d a d g h t c r c detect s . Vet. Pa a l . 99, 249–259.
 Ba h e l, M.A., T r a, D., Pa s , L.A., The e, O.M., Mbat , P.A.,

