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Morphological and molecular characterization of root-lesion nematode *Pratylenchus hippeastri* from Korea

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Contribution to Environmental Biology

- We report the taxonomic aspects of an unrecorded species that have been reported abroad but not yet reported in Korea.
- Pratylenchus hippeastri is an important plant-parasitic nematode that can affect agricultural crops.

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Received: 30 November 2023 Revised: 15 December 2023 Revision accepted: 22 December 2023 **Abstract:** The root-lesion nematode *Pratylenchus* spp. is the most important plantparasitic nematode due to its worldwide distribution, wide host ranges, and migratory endoparasitic characteristics. One population of *Pratylenchus* collected from the giant pussy willow (*Salix chaenomeloides* Kimura) in the Andong area as part of a nematode survey in Korea was characterized morphologically and by molecular methods. The analysis of morphological measurements and morphometric characteristics, as well as DNA sequencing of the rRNA large subunit (LSU) D2/D3 expansion segments and the internal transcribed spacer (ITS) gene sequence, confirmed the identity of this population as *P. hippeastri*. This study is the first report of *P. hippeastri* associated with *Salix chaenomeloides* in Korea and worldwide. Further studies on distribution and pathogenicity in different *P. hippeastri* host crops, such as grapevines, strawberries, and apples, are necessary. The taxonomic keys to 16 *Pratylenchus* species in Korea are provided.

Keywords: Pratylenchus hippeastri, Salix chaenomeloides, root-lesion nematode, D2/ D3 expansion segments, ITS gene sequence

1. INTRODUCTION

The root-lesion nematode, *Pratylenchus* spp. is a migratory endoparasitic nematodes with over 350 hosts, including import crops such as soybeans, potatoes, corn, bananas, wheat, and cabbage. The genus *Pratylenchus* Filipjev, 1936 contains approximately 100 diverse species (Handoo *et al.* 2021), with 16 species recorded in the Republic of Korea (Park 1996; Park *et al.* 2002; Choi *et al.* 2006; Kim *et al.* 2006; Park *et al.* 2009; Kim and Chun 2014).

Research on nematodes in Korean agricultural environments is being conducted (Ko *et al.* 2021). In addition, nematodes are an important factor in investigating the microbial environment in the Korean plant ecosystem (Eo *et al.* 2018). The large number of hosts as well as its migratory endoparasitic habits make this genus a very important root-lesion nematode in crops. During the survey of soil nematodes, *Pratylenchus hippeastri* was isolated from Giant pussy willow (*Salix chaenomeloides* Kimura). *Pratylenchus hippeastri*, also known as the amaryllis lesion nematode, has been previously reported from the USA (De Luca *et al.* 2010; Handoo *et al.* 2020), China (Wang *et al.* 2016), and South Africa (Knoetze *et al.* 2019; Shokoohi 2019). The host range of this nematode includes amaryllis, bromeliads, grapevines, strawberry and apples (De Luca *et al.* 2010; Wang *et al.* 2016; Knoetze *et al.* 2019; Handoo *et al.* 2020; Brenes-Campos *et al.* 2022), as well as Acer (Chen *et al.* 2014) and cape willow trees, *Salix mucronata* (Shokoohi 2019). This study reports the first detection of this species in Korea from Giant pussy willow, or S. *chaenomeloides*.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

Collection methods of nematode. Soil and roots were collected from a Giant pussy willow tree in Andong (36°25′48.0″N 128°38′20.0″E), Gyeongsangbuk-do, Korea. Nematodes were separated from soil and roots using the modified Baermann funnel method (Kang 2016).

Morphological analysis. In the analysis, twelve nematodes with fully grown and confirmed genital organs were used. Individual nematodes were mounted in water on temporary glass slides, measured, and digitally photographed using an Olympus, BX53 light microscope with differential interference contrast optics and an Olympus DP73 digital camera. Additional measurements were taken from specimens processed by either the lactophenol method (Franklin and Goodey 1949) or the quick glycerol method (Seinhorst 1959).

Molecular analysis. Each nematode individuals was picked and thirty nematodes were transferred to a 2.0 mL microcentrifuge tube. DNA was extracted using the DNeasy Blood and Tissue Kit (Qiagen Inc., CA, USA). Two rRNA fragments, namely LSU D2/D3 and ITS region, were amplified, respectively. The primers for D2/D3 expansion segments amplification were D2A (5'-ACAAGTACCGTGGGGAAAGTTG-3') and D3B (5'-TCGGAAGGAACCAGCTACTA-3') (Subbotin *et al.* 2006). The primers for ITS amplification were TW81 (5'-GTTTCCGTAGGTGAACCTGC-3') and AB28 (5'-ATATGCTTAAGTTCAGCGGGT-3') (Subbotin *et al.* 2008). The genomic DNA was used as a

template for PCR as follows: after an initial 5-minute denaturation step at 94°C, a 40-cycle amplification (94°C for 1 minute, 56°C [D2/D3 expansion segments] to 58°C [ITS region] for 1 minute, and 72°C for 1 minute) was conducted. The final extension step was continued for 10 minute at 72°C. To confirm the successful amplification of DNA by PCR, electrophoresis was performed using $0.5 \times$ TAE buffer on a 1% agarose gel. The PCR product was subsequently purified using a PCR purification kit (Bioneer Co., Korea). The amplicons were cloned into pGEM-T Easy Vector system (Promega, USA), and the resultant plasmid DNA was isolated using a Plasmid Miniprep System (Bioneer Co., Korea). Both strands of the PCR amplicons were cycle-sequenced with an ABI PRISM BigDye Terminator version 1.1 Cycle Sequencing kit and ABI Prism ABI 377 Genetic analyzer (PE Applied Biosystems, CA, USA).

Phylogenetic analysis. The LSU D2/D3 expansion segments and ITS sequences of *P. hippeastri* were compared using the BLAST sequence alignment software of the NCBI database (National Center for Biotechnology Information) (http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/). Sequences were also aligned using the ClustalW implemented MEGA 11.0 software. Results of closest nucleotide sequences were selected to BLASTn analysis. The seqences of the ITS region exhibited 99% similarity to *P. hippeastri* (FN554886.1) and 28S rDNA D2/D3 expansion segment were found to be 99% identical to those of *P. hippeastri* (MK749422.1). Phylogenetic analyses were performed using MEGA version 11.0 (Tamura *et al.* 2021) with the neighbor-joining (NJ) statistical method and the Jukes-Cantor model.

3. RESULTS

Pratylenchus hippeastri Inserra, Troccoli, Gozel, Bernard, Dunn, and Duncan, 2007 왕버들뿌리썩이선충(신칭)(Figs. 1-4; Table 1)

Description. Female (n=12): Body slender, slightly curved ventrally after relaxation with length= $424.1 \pm 16.0 \,\mu\text{m}$ and maximum body diameter= $19.0 \pm 3.8 \,\mu\text{m}$ (Figs. 1A, 2A). Lip region flatten with two annuli. The stylet is strong with length= $15.3 \pm 0.4 \,\mu\text{m}$, basal knobs ellipsoidal or slightly concave with a height= $1.8 \pm 0.1 \,\mu\text{m}$ and width= $2.9 \pm 0.1 \,\mu\text{m}$ (Fig. 1B). Pharyngeal



Fig. 1. Light microscopy photos of *Pratylenchus hippeastri* females. A. Entire female body, B. anterior region and stylet, and C. lateral view of the vulva and tail (scale bar: A. 50 µm; B, C. 20 µm).

glands overlapping intestine ventrally (Fig. 2B). Spermatheca rectangular without sperm. Vulval lips usually slightly raised in some specimens. Vulval body diameter = $16.9 \pm 0.7 \mu m$ and distance between vulva to anus = $73.0 \pm 16.6 \mu m$, anal body width = $11.5 \pm 1.0 \mu m$. Tail conoid with bluntly pointed or subhemispherical, smooth terminus with length = $24.7 \pm 2.7 \mu m$ (Figs. 1C, 2C). De Man ratios are $a = 22.8 \pm 2.0 \mu m$, $b = 5.7 \pm 0.2$, $b' = 4.1 \pm 0.1$, $c = 16.7 \pm 1.5$, $c' = 2.2 \pm 0.1$, $V = 79.3 \pm 0.4$ (Table 1).

Korean J. Environ. Biol. 41(4) : 657-665 (2023)



Fig. 2. Drawings of *Pratylenchus hippeastri*. A. Entire female body, B. basal bulb and esophagus, C. lateral view of the vulva and tail, and D. anterior region with stylet (scale bar: A. 50 µm; B, C. 20 µm; D. 10 µm).

Male : Not found.

Molecular characters and phylogenetic analyses. The sequenced LSU D2/D3 expansion segments of *P. hippeastri* were 748 bp in length. A Blastn search of the LSU D2/D3 expansion segments sequence revealed high matches with the originally reported sequences of *P. hippeastri* (KP161608.1 and MK749422.1). The identities of the LSD D2/D3 expansion segments and the originally reported sequence were 99.5% without insertions or deletions. The phylogenetic tree based on the LSU D2/D3 expansion segments sequences showed that *P. hippeastri* was nested within the same clade with all the reported *P. hippeastri* (Fig. 3). The sequenced ITS segments of *P. hippeastri* were 932 bp in length. A Blastn search of the ITS sequence revealed high matches with the originally reported sequence es of *P. hippeastri* (FJ713000.1). The identities of ITS segments and the originally reported sequence were 99.6% without insertions/deletions. The phylogenetic tree based on the ITS sequence showed that the sequence of *P. hippeastri* obtained in this study and all the reported *P. hippeastri* sequences formed a high de-

	Korea	Wang <i>et al</i> . (2016)	Gu <i>et al</i> . (2014)	De Luca <i>et al.</i> (2012)	Inserra <i>et al</i> . (2007)
n	12	10	16	10	22
L	424.14 ± 16.0	447.8±28.2	479.9±31.9	614 ± 22.4	590 ± 21.8
а	22.8 ± 2.0	27.7 ± 1.4	28.0 ± 1.9	25.2 ± 2.0	25.5 ± 1.2
b	5.7 ± 0.2	5.4 ± 0.3	6.2 ± 0.3	6.6 ± 0.4	6.5 ± 0.4
b'	4.1 ± 0.1	3.2 ± 0.2	3.9±0.3	4.5±0.4	3.9 ± 0.2
С	16.7±1.5	17.9 ± 1.5	16.5 ± 1.3	18.6±2.0	16.1 ± 1.0
с′	2.2 ± 0.1	2.3 ± 0.2	2.7 ± 0.3	2.2 ± 0.2	2.6 ± 0.2
V	79.3 ± 0.4	78.2 ± 1.3	77.2 ± 1.0	77.7 ± 1.2	77±0.8
Stylet length	15.3 ± 0.4	14.9 ± 0.4	15.8±0.8	15.8±0.4	15.5 ± 0.4
Stylet knob width	2.9±0.1	3.2 ± 0.2	-	-	4.7±0.3
Stylet knod height	1.8 ± 0.1	1.8 ± 0.1	-	-	2.1 ± 0.3
Max. body diam	19.0 ± 3.8	16.2 ± 0.9	17.2 ± 1.7	24.4 ± 0.7	23.2 ± 1.4
Vulva body diam	16.9 ± 0.7	14.9±1	15.6 ± 1.7	21.6 ± 1.6	20.5 ± 1.1
Anal body diam	11.5 ± 1.0	11 ± 0.7	11.4 ± 1.2	15.3±0.4	14.4 ± 0.8
Tail length	24.7 ± 2.7	25 ± 1.9	29.5±3.1	33.3±3.0	36.8±2.2
Vulva to anus distance	73.0 ± 16.6	74.4±8.6	77.0±9.8	103 ± 5.4	98±6.1

Table 1. Morphometric measurements of Pratylenchus hippeastri

All measurements are in µm and in the form of mean±standard deviation (L, overall body length; a, body length/greatest body diameter; b, body length/ distance from the anterior to the esophago-intestinal valve; b', body length/distance from the anterior to the base of the esophageal glands; c, body length/tail length; c', tail length/tail diameter at the anus or cloaca; V, % distance of vulva from anterior).

gree of similarity (Fig. 4). The result was indicated as *P. hippeastri* with a high probability, but the number of matching data was small. Compared with the results of the LSUD2/D3 expansion segments sequence, it is assumed that it is simply the result of a small number of data.

4. DISCUSSION

In this study, the morphometric and morphological characteristics of *P. hippeastri* from Korea were found to be consistent with the original report, except for a shorter body and tail length ($424.14 \pm 16.0 \mu m$ and $24.7 \pm 2.7 \mu m$ vs. $614 \pm 22.4 \mu m$ and $33.3 \pm 3.0 \mu m$, respectively) (De Luca *et al.* 2010). The body and tail length of *P. hippeastri* from Korea were identified to be similar to those from China (Wang *et al.* 2016) and Japan (Gu *et al.* 2014). The body and tail length of *P. hippeastri* from China was $447.8 \pm 28.2 \mu m$ and $25 \pm 1.9 \mu m$, respectively. While those from Japan were $479.9 \pm 31.9 \mu m$ and $29.5 \pm 3.1 \mu m$, respectively.

The variability in body length within a species can be

affected by nutritional or environmental factors (Castillo and Vovlas 2007). The body lengths of *P. hippeastri* from different region varied, while the ratio of V (%, distance of vulva from anterior) is very similar: among specimens form Korea (79.3 \pm 0.4 μ m), China (78.2 \pm 1.3 μ m) (Wang *et al.* 2016), Japan (77.2 ± 1.0 μ m) (Gu *et al.* 2014), California $(77 \pm 0.8 \,\mu\text{m})$ (Inserra *et al.* 2007), and Florida (77.7 \pm 1.2 µm) (De Luca *et al.* 2012), respectively. Pratylenchus hippeastri may be better adapted to warm tropical regions (Wang et al. 2016). Consequently, P. hippeastri found in tropical ornamentals such as amaryllis and bromeliads (Inserra et al. 2007; De Luca et al. 2012) were larger than those found on apple trees from China (Wang et al. 2016). Significant variation in length has previously been observed in Pratylenchus species. Bogal et al. (2021) reported that the body length of seven populations of P. penetrans collected in Europe ranged from 381 to 625 µm. P. hippeastri was previously identified as an unrecorded species of Pratylenchus in Korea (NIBR 2010). The identification relied on 28S rDNA analysis along with four photos. However, the specimens lacked information on morphological measurements, locality, or host plant



Fig. 3. Bayesian phylogenetic tree of the genus *Pratylenchus*. The analysis was conducted using 30 *Pratylenchus hippeastri* specimens. Bayesian 50% majority rule consensus tree from two runs, as inferred from the analysis of D2D3 of 28S rDNA gene sequences under the GTR + G model. Posterior probability values of more than 50% are given in the appropriate clades.

details. Therefore, this is the first comprehensive report of *P. hippeastri* in Korea. *P. hippeastri*, a root-lesion nematodes, can damage apples, strawberries, and grapevines as well as willows native to Korea, also a possibility of infection with other unknown species of plants, requiring further research and quarantine.

Key to Pratylenchus Species in Korea

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1. Lip region composed of two annules-----2
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- Lip region composed of three annules7
2. Tail terminus crenate
P. flakkensis Seinhorst, 1968
- Tail terminus smooth3
3. Males are common; spermatheca is filled with sperm
4
- Males are rare; spermatheca is empty5
4. Tail terminus is narrowly rounded to subacute
<i>P. loosi</i> Loof, 1960



Fig. 4. Bayesian phylogenetic tree of the genus *Pratylenchus*. The analysis was conducted using 30 *Pratylenchus hippeastri* specimens. Bayesian 50% majority rule consensus tree from two runs, as inferred from the analysis of ITS sequences under the GTR + G model. Posterior probability values of more than 50% are given in the appropriate clades.

- Tail terminus is slender, broadly to conically rounded, truncate or indentedP. coffeae (Zimmermann, 1898) Filipjev & Schuurmans Stekhovem, 1941
- (closely resembles *P. coffeae*), but is distinguished by its divided pattern when viewed en face, a short distance from the spear base to DGO (1.8–2.3 μm vs. 2.6–3.3 μm in mean), narrower spear knobs (3.4–3.7 μm vs. 3.7–4.2 μm in mean), and frequent 3 lip annuli (28.5% on either side and 5.5% on both sides: n=91).....*P. pseudocoffeae* Mizukubo, 1992
- 5. Vulva at 80-87%; tail terminus rounded or slightly oblique......P. neglectus (Rensch, 1924)
- Vulva at 72-80%; tail conoid to broad6
- 6. Post-uterine branch = 19.8 (12–43) *P. scribneri* Steiner, 1943
- Post-uterine branch = 37–45 μm long (usually more than twice of vulval body diameter); Tail conoid ……
 P. kuma-motoensis Mizukubo, Sugimura & Uesugi, 2007
- Post-uterine branch = $30 \pm 4.9 (21-45)$; Female tail

tip with areolated lateral field *Phippeastri* Inserra,Troccoli, Gozel, Bernard, Dunn & Duncan, 2007 7. Tail terminus crenate or with a distinct sub-ventral

- 8. Males unknown; spermatheca without sperm; Vulva at 80–86%; lateral field with four lines; annulation prominent *P. crenatus* Loof, 1960
- Males common; spermatheca with sperm9

- 10. Males rare; spermatheca empty*P. thornei* Sher & Allen 1953
- Males common; spermatheca filled with sperm ···· 11
- 11. Spermatheca oval; body slender; average a = 29 or more.....*P. vulnus* Allen & Jensen, 1951
 Spermathece round comptimes more equate and

- (closely resembles to those of *P. subpenetrans*) but body length is much longer (female: 518–626 μm vs. 330–481 μm; male: 514–581 μm vs. 329–472 μm)····
- *P. subpenetrans* Choi, Lee, Park, Han, & Choi, 2006
 Posterior uterine branch short, undifferentiated; body long and slender; average a = more than 25.....
- 13. Lip region low, slightly set off; stylet 15–17 μm long; a=26 (21–31)*P. penetrans* (Cobb, 1917) Filipjev & Shuurmans Stekhoven, 1941
- Lip region high, continuous; stylet 14–16 μm long;
 a=27 (24–31).......P. mediterraneous Corbett, 1983

CRediT authorship contribution statement

S Huh: Investigation, Data curation, Formal analysis, Writing - Original draft, Writing - Review & editing. **N Park:** Conceptualization, Resources, Methodology. **H Kang:** Conceptualization, Resources, Methodology. **C Bae:** Conceptualization, Resources. **I Choi:** Supervision, Writing - Review & editing.

Declaration of Competing Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest

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