

Editorial note

Some time back the editors of the Netherlands Journal of Plant Pathology were asked by the Cryptogram Subcommittee of the International Committee on the Nomenclature of Viruses (ICNV) whether they would help in organizing a user's trial of the cryptogram.

A cryptogram adds precision to the vernacular name of a virus. It shows how much or how little is known about certain properties of the virus, and helps overcome the difficulties of synonymy, homonymy, and translation into other languages. The properties encoded in the cryptogram are those which seem at present to best distinguish between virus groups or small collections of such groups, however they could be changed or added to. Cryptograms are merely additions to the vernacular names and used when writing these names.

Each cryptogram consists of four pairs of symbols, such as bacteriophage MS 2 [R/1:1/28:S/S:B/O], with the following meanings:

First pair: Type of nucleic acid/strandedness of nucleic acid

Symbols for type of nucleic acid:

R = RNA

D = DNA

Symbols for strandedness:

1 = single-stranded

2 = double-stranded

Second pair: Molecular weight of nucleic acid (in millions)/percentage of nucleic acid in infective particles

Third pair: Outline of particle/outline of 'nucleocapsid' (the nucleic acid plus the protein most closely in contact with it).

Symbols for both properties:

S = essentially spherical

X = complex or none of above

E = elongated, with parallel sides, ends not rounded

U = elongated, with parallel sides, end(s) rounded

Fourth pair: Kinds of host infected/kinds of vector

Symbols for kinds of host:

A = actinomycete

I = invertebrate

B = bacterium

S = seed plant

F = fungus

V = vertebrate

Symbols for kinds of vector:

Ac = mite and tick (Acarina, Arachnida)

Di = fly and mosquito (Diptera, Insecta)

Al = white fly (Aleyrodidae, Hemiptera, Insecta)

Fu = fungus (Chytridiales and Plasmodiophorales, Fungi)

Ap = aphid (Aphididae, Hemiptera, Insecta)

Gy = mirid, psyllid, or tingid bug (Gymnocerata, Hemiptera)

Ne = nematode (Nematoda)

Au = leaf hopper, plant, or tree hopper
(Auchenorrhyncha, Hemiptera)
Cc = Mealybug (Coccidae, Hemiptera)
Cl = beetle (Coleoptera, Insecta)

Ps = Psylla (Psyllidae, Hemiptera)
Si = flea (Siphonaptera, Insecta)
Th = thrips (Thysanoptera, Insecta)
Ve = vectors known but none of above
0 = spreads without a vector *via* contaminated environment

Symbols for all pairs:

*Property of the virus is not known

() Enclosed information is doubtful or unconfirmed

When a virus is known to be related to others, the group name can be added after the cryptogram; for example, tobacco ringspot virus [R/1:1.8/42:S/S/Ne; Nepovirus group]. The ICNV is at present considering virus group names.

The editors are now asking the authors of virological papers to use these cryptograms once in their paper, preferably when each virus is first named.