

Safety Report for EvaGreen[®] dye

A summary of mutagenicity and environmental safety test results from three independent laboratories

www.biotium.com
General Inquiries: order@biotium.com
Technical Support: techsupport@biotium.com
Phone: 800-304-5357



Overview

Real-time PCR or quantitative PCR (qPCR) is a sequence-specific DNA quantitation technique widely practiced in research and diagnostic fields by laboratory technicians and scientists of all levels. A large number of qPCR experiments are carried out using a DNA-binding dye as a reporter molecule. However, despite the fact that DNA-binding dyes are inherently dangerous due to their potential to cause mutation, very few PCR dyes have been thoroughly examined for their safety. Thus, handling and disposal of PCR master mixes can be a health and environmental issue. Indeed, the common qPCR dye SYBR® Green I is found to be even more environmentally toxic than ethidium bromide, a well-known mutagen.¹ It has been suggested that SYBR® Green I interferes with the natural DNA-repair mechanism in cells and as a result it potentiates genotoxicity of chemicals as well as DNA damage caused by UV light. Although no safety data are available on other PCR and HRM dyes (e.g., SYTO®9, LCGreen®, BRYT Green® and ResoLight), these dyes are known to enter cells in a matter of minutes, thus posing potential genotoxicity risk. Bearing this information in mind, Biotium's scientists engineered the EvaGreen® dye structure to maximize the dye's safety without compromising PCR performance.

Dye Design Principle

At the outset of the EvaGreen® dye project, we recognized that one way to make a PCR dye safe is to eliminate or minimize the chance for the dye to interact with genomic DNA in living cells. Armed with this insight, we sought to improve the dye on three fronts: 1) to make the dye impenetrable to latex gloves; 2) to make the dye impenetrable to cell membranes; and 3) to design the dye so that its metabolites have little or no interaction with DNA. By achieving these objectives, successive lines of safety defense are built to offer maximal protection. Based on this design principle, chemists at Biotium incorporated structural features into the dye to achieve the desired dye properties.

Safety Tests

EvaGreen® dye was subjected to a series of tests both by Biotium and by three independent testing services to assess the dye's safety for routine handling and disposal. These tests include: 1) glove penetration test; 2) cell permeability test; 3) Ames test; and 4) environmental safety tests. Results of the tests are summarized in the table below. The data show that EvaGreen® dye passed all of the tests, thus validating the dye design principle. Detailed test results are described in pages 3-6.

Conclusion

EvaGreen® dye possesses novel chemical features designed to minimize dye-DNA interaction in living cells. Test results confirm that the dye is impenetrable to both latex gloves and cell membranes. The dye is noncytotoxic and nonmutagenic at concentrations well above the working concentrations used in qPCR. Furthermore, EvaGreen® dye has successfully passed environmental safety tests in compliance with CCR Title 22 Hazardous Waste Characterization, an environmental regulation in the state of California. As a result, EvaGreen® dye is not only safe to handle but also can be conveniently disposed of down the drain.

References:

1. Ohta et al. Ethidium bromide and SYBR Green I enhances the genotoxicity of UV-irradiation and chemical mutagens in *E. coli*, *Mut. Res.* 492, 91(2001).

Table 1. Summary of EvaGreen Dye Safety Test Results

Test	Latex and Nitrile Glove Penetration	Cell Membrane Permeability	Ames Test	Hazardous Waste Screening (aquatic toxicity test)
Result	Impenetrable	Impenetrable	Nonmutagenic	Non-toxic to aquatic life

This document is intended to provide a brief summary of the safety data on EvaGreen® dye obtained from several independent laboratories. If you wish to see the original test reports, you may contact Biotium technical support at techsupport@biotium.com.

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SYBR and SYTO are registered trademarks of Thermo Fisher Scientific.

LCGreen is a registered trademark of Biofire.

BRYT Green is a registered trademark of Promega.

Glove Penetration Test

Purpose

Latex and nitrile gloves are commonly worn by researchers in laboratories as protective gear. The purpose of this test is to see if these glove materials can act as effective barriers to EvaGreen® dye.

Method

A finger of either a latex glove or nitrile glove filled with deionized water was submerged in a beaker containing 20X EvaGreen® dye solution. After 24 hours, the water in the glove finger and the EvaGreen® dye solution in the bath were analyzed by absorption spectrum.

Results

No trace of EvaGreen® dye was detected in the finger of either the latex glove or the nitrile glove (Figure 1).

Conclusion

Latex or nitrile gloves can serve as an adequate barrier to EvaGreen® dye at a concentration at least as high as 20X (i.e., a concentration 20 times higher than the typical concentration used in qPCR).

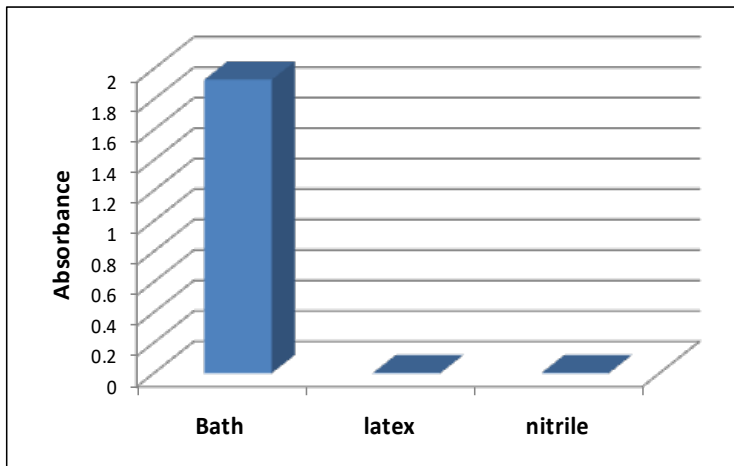


Figure 1. Absorbance values of the bath, water from the latex glove finger and water from the nitrile glove finger taken at EvaGreen® dye absorption maximum (471 nm) following 24 hours of dialysis.

Cell Permeability Test

Purpose

The purpose of this test is to see if EvaGreen® dye can cross cell membranes to stain nuclear DNA.

Method

HeLa cells were incubated at 37°C with EvaGreen® dye or SYBR® Green I at 1.2 mM dye concentration (i.e., 1X concentration used for qPCR). Fluorescence images of the cells were taken following incubation for 5 and 30 minutes, respectively.

Results

SYBR® Green I entered cells in as little as 5 minutes whereas no nuclear staining was observed for EvaGreen® dye even after 30 minutes of incubation. Image taken with prolonged photoexposure revealed that EvaGreen® dye mainly associated with the cell membranes.

Conclusion

EvaGreen® dye is cell membrane impermeable whereas SYBR® Green I enters cell rapidly.

SYBR Green I	EvaGreen	Incubation time
		5 min
		30 min
		30 min (long photo-exposure)

Figure 2. Comparison of cell membrane permeability between EvaGreen® dye and SYBR® Green I. HeLa cells were incubated with SYBR® Green I (1.2 μM) or EvaGreen® dye (1.2 μM) at 37°C. Photographs were taken following incubation for 5 and 30 minutes. SYBR® Green I entered cells rapidly while EvaGreen® dye appeared membrane-impermeable as evident from the absence of cell nuclear staining. Images taken with long photo-exposure time revealed that EvaGreen® dye only associated with cell membranes. SYBR® Green I has been suggested to interfere with the DNA repair mechanism in living cells, a rationale used to explain the observation that the dye is even more environmentally toxic than ethidium bromide (Ohta et al. Mutation Research, 492, 91-97(2001)).

Ames Test

Purpose

Ames test is a standard assay to assess the mutagenic potential of chemicals. As cancer is often associated with DNA damage, the test can be used to estimate the carcinogenic potential of a chemical compound.

Test System

The test employed two *Salmonella* strains, TA98 and TA1537, both of which carry mutation(s) in the operon encoding for histidine biosynthesis. When these bacteria are exposed to mutagenic agents, under certain conditions reverse mutation from amino acid (histidine) auxotrophy to prototrophy occurs, giving colonies of revertants. Both strains of bacteria used in the assays are among those recommended by OECD 471 for use in the Ames test. These two strains of *S. typhimurium* have been shown to be reliably and reproducibly responsive between laboratories. In order to test the mutagenic toxicity of metabolized products, S9 fraction, a rat liver extract, was used in the assays. The S9 fraction contains a mixture of several enzymes and is known to be able to convert some chemicals into mutagens.

Test Articles and Vehicle

EvaGreen® dye along with ethidium bromide (EB) as a reference were tested under the same condition. DMSO was used for dissolving each dye to give the following stock concentrations: 0 (control), 1, 2.5, 5, 10, 25, 50, 75, 100, 250 and 500 µg/mL.

Test Procedure

The following was added to each sterile culture tube containing 2.0 mL top agar: 0.1 mL of overnight cell culture (TA98 or TA1537), 0.1 mL of a dye stock solution, and either 0.5 mL of S9/Cofactor mix or 0.5 mL of phosphate buffered saline. Thus, the control and the ten dye stock solutions result in the following per plate dosages: 0, 0.1, 0.25, 0.5, 1, 2.5, 5, 7.5, 10, 25, and 50 µg/plate. These dosages corresponded to a final dye concentration of: 0, 0.04, 0.09, 0.19, 0.37, 0.93, 1.85, 2.78, 3.7, 9.3, and 18.5 µg/mL, respectively.

The contents of each tube were vortexed, poured onto Vogel-Bonner media plates, and evenly distributed. The agar on the test plates was allowed to harden. The plates were inverted and incubated at 37°C for 2 days.

Revertant colonies were counted using a New Brunswick Biotran III automatic colony counter.

Ames Test Using *Salmonella* Strain TA98 without S9 Metabolic Activation

(Tests performed by Litron Laboratories Inc., Rochester, NY)

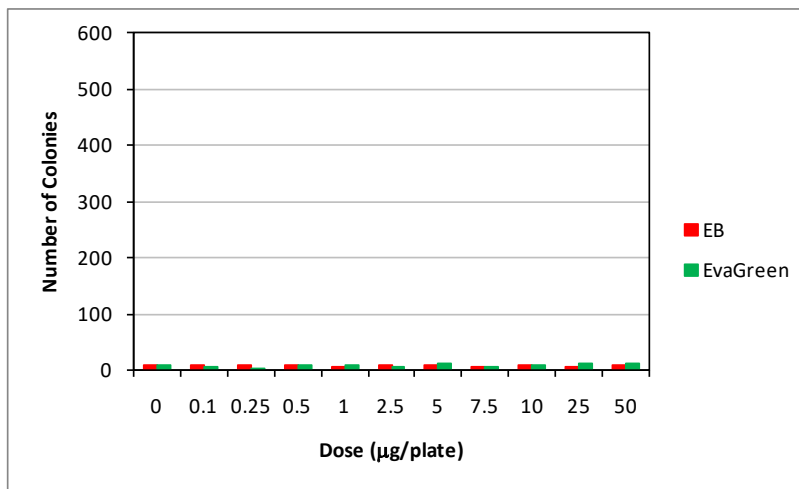


Figure 3. Comparison of mutagenicity between EvaGreen® dye and ethidium bromide (EB) in +1 frameshift *Salmonella* indicator strain TA98 without the presence of S9 fraction.

Conclusion

- In *Salmonella* strain TA98 bacteria and without S9 metabolic activation, EvaGreen® dye is nonmutagenic over the entire dose range from 0.1 µg/plate (or 40 ng/mL) to 50 µg/plate (or 18.5 µg/mL). The 1X concentration of EvaGreen® dye used in qPCR is about 1 mg/mL, which is well within this range.
- Under the same condition, EB is nonmutagenic at dosage up to 25 mg/plate but becomes weakly mutagenic at 50 mg/plate. The low genotoxicity of EB in the absence of S9 activity is consistent with an earlier report (McCann, et al. Proc. Natl. Acad. Sci. USA 72, 5135)1975)).

Ames Test Using *Salmonella* Strain TA98 with S9 Metabolic Activation

(Tests performed by Litron Laboratories Inc., Rochester, NY)

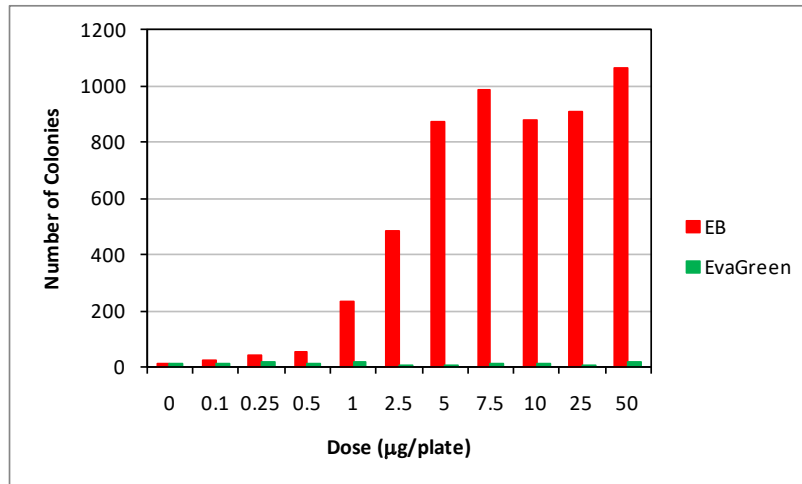


Figure 4. Comparison of mutagenicity between EvaGreen® dye and EB in +1 frameshift *Salmonella* indicator strain TA98 with the presence of S9 fraction.

Conclusion

- In *Salmonella* strain TA98 bacteria and in the presence of S9 fraction, EvaGreen® dye is nonmutagenic over the entire dose range from 0.1 µg/plate (or 40 ng/mL) to 50 µg/plate (or 18.5 µg/mL). The 1X concentration of EvaGreen® dye used in qPCR is about 1 mg/mL, which is well within this range.
- Under the same condition, EB is highly mutagenic, consistent with the known genotoxicity of the dye.

Ames Test Using *Salmonella* Strain TA1537 without S9 Metabolic Activation

(Tests performed by Litron Laboratories Inc., Rochester, NY)

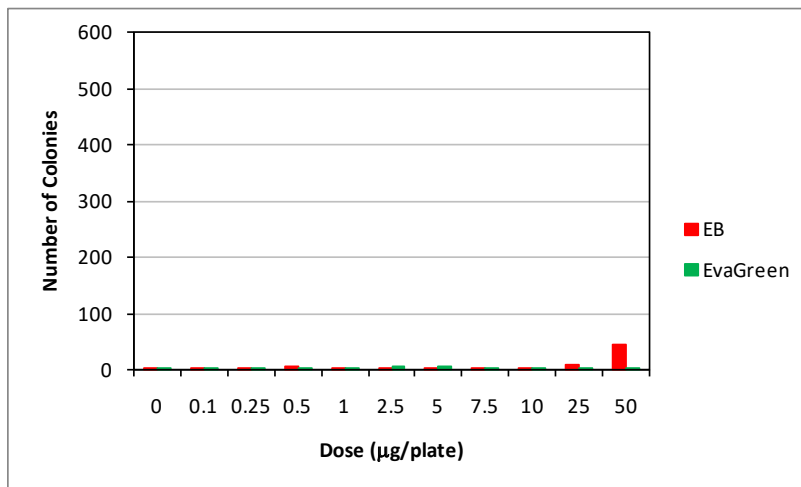


Figure 5. Comparison of mutagenicity between EvaGreen® and EB in -1 frameshift *Salmonella* indicator strain TA1537 without the presence of S9 fraction.

Conclusion

- In *Salmonella* strain TA1537 bacteria and without S9 metabolic activation, EvaGreen® dye is nonmutagenic over the entire dose range from 0.1 µg/plate (or 40 ng/mL) to 50 µg/plate (or 18.5 µg/mL). The 1X concentration of EvaGreen® dye used in qPCR is about 1 mg/mL, which is well within this range.
- Under the same condition, EB is nonmutagenic at dosage up to 10 mg/plate but becomes weakly mutagenic at above 25 mg/plate.

Ames Test Using *Salmonella* Strain TA1537 with S9 Metabolic Activation

(Tests performed by Litron Laboratories Inc., Rochester, NY)

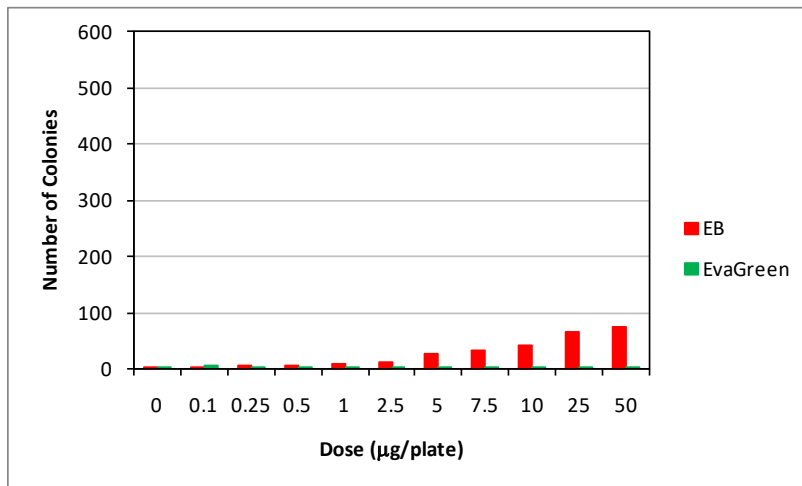


Figure 6. Comparison of mutagenicity between EvaGreen® and EB in *Salmonella* -1 frameshift indicator strain TA1537 with the presence of S9 fraction.

Conclusion

- In *Salmonella* strain TA1537 bacteria and with S9 metabolic activation, EvaGreen® dye is nonmutagenic over the entire dose range from 0.1 µg/plate (or 40 ng/mL) to 50 µg/plate (or 18.5 µg/mL). The 1X concentration of EvaGreen® dye used in qPCR is about 1 mg/mL, which is well within this range.
- Under the same condition, EB becomes significantly mutagenic at above 2.5 mg/plate, consistent with the known genotoxicity of the dye.

Aquatic Toxicity Test

(Performed by Nautilus Environmental, San Diego, CA)

Purpose

This test assesses the acute toxicity of EvaGreen® dye to aquatic life. The results of the test are used to determine if the dye can be directly released into the environment for disposal as required by regulatory guideline CCR Title 22 in the state of California.

Test Specifications

Test start date and time: 02/06/2009, 15:45

Test end date and time: 02/10/2009, 14:00

Test organism: *Pimephales promelas* (Fathead minnow)

Organism mean length/weight: 33.2 mm/0.20 g

Test concentration: 750, 500, and 250 mg/L sample (EvaGreen® dye at 2X); plus Lab Control

Number of replicates and fish: 2 replicates with 10 fish each (20 fish total per concentration)

Method used: California Department of Fish & Game, 1988 Acute Procedures; EPA/600/4-85/013, 1985 Acute Manual

Regulatory guideline: CCR Title 22 Hazardous Waste Characterization

Passing requirements: Sample must result in greater than 50% survival at a concentration of 500 mg/L ($LC_{50} > 500$ mg/L) to be "not hazardous" to aquatic life.

Results

The results are summarized in Table 2 below. The sample resulted in an $LC_{50} > 750$ mg/L.

Conclusion

EvaGreen® dye at 2X is classified as nonhazardous to aquatic life under CCR Title 22 regulation. Thus, EvaGreen® dye at 2X or lower concentrations can be safely released into the environment.

Table 2. Summary of EvaGreen® Dye Aquatic Toxicity Data

Sample	Dose (mg/L)	% Survival
Lab Control	N/A	100
EvaGreen® Dye	250	100
	500	100
	750	100

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