PSF006

PMAxx™ Dye, 20 mM in H₂O

Catalog Number: 40069
Unit Size: 100 uL

Storage and Handling
PMAxx™ solution should be stored at -20°C protected from light. When stored as recommended the dye solution is stable for at least six months from date of receipt.

Spectral Properties:
λ₂₅₀ = 464 nm (before photolysis)
λ₃₇₀ λ₄₄₀ = ~510/~610 nm (following photolysis and reaction with DNA/RNA)

Product Description
PMAxx™ is a high-affinity photoreactive DNA binding dye invented by scientists at Biotium for viability PCR (v-PCR) of bacteria and other organisms. In v-PCR, pretreatment of a cell culture with a viability dye such as PMAxx™ or PMA allows differentiation of live and dead cells using qPCR or other DNA amplification methods (Fig. 3). It has been validated in a wide variety of bacterial strains, as well as yeast and viruses.

PMAxx™ binds to dsDNA with high affinity. Upon photolysis, the dye covalently reacts with DNA, resulting in permanent DNA modification. PMAxx™ is cell membrane-impermeant, and can be used to selectively modify only the DNA in dead cells while leaving the DNA in viable cells intact. PMAxx™ inhibits PCR amplification of modified DNA templates by a combination of removal of modified DNA during purification and inhibition of template amplification by DNA polymerases (Nocker et al. 2006). This feature makes the dye highly useful in the selective detection of viable cells by quantitative real-time PCR.

When using PMAxx™ for viability PCR of gram-negative bacteria, we recommend the use of PMA Enhancer for Gram-Negative Bacteria, 5X Solution (31038). When Enhancer is added to gram-negative bacteria before treatment with PMAxx™, dead cell DNA levels are further decreased, and thus live/dead cell discrimination is improved.

In experiments with laboratory bacterial strains, PMAxx™ increases the difference between live and dead a further 3-7 Ct compared to PMA. Therefore viability PCR with PMAxx™ is more effective at discriminating between live and dead bacteria. Because PMAxx™ works the same way as PMA, it can directly replace PMA in your current v-PCR protocol.

Considerations for viability PCR
1. Viability PCR differentiates viable from non-viable cells based on cell membrane permeability. Many methods of killing cells result in compromised cell membranes, and are thus compatible with viability PCR. However, some methods, such as UV light exposure, may not immediately result in disrupted cell membranes. Literature searches and pilot studies may help to determine whether viability PCR will work with your chosen cell type and killing method.

2. It is advisable to choose the appropriate dye for your viability PCR experiment. Biotium offers three different viability PCR dyes: EMA, PMA, & PMAxx™. In general, we recommend using PMAxx™ for bacterial samples and PMA for yeast and fungal samples. EMA is more permeant to live cells and thus often gives false negative results. However, you may want to test more than one dye to determine the optimal dye for your sample type.

3. Primer selection is an important consideration. If you would like to simultaneously detect all species of bacteria in a mixture, primers against rRNA targets that are known to be pan-species-specific are a good choice. If detection of only one species or strain of bacteria is desired, you will want to design or find specific primers. Dye molecules will be bound randomly along the DNA strand. Therefore, the longer the amplicon, the more likely it will be that a dye molecule will be bound in that region. It is recommended that an amplicon of at least 100 bp is used, and longer amplicons generally give better results.

4. Freezing of samples prior to performing viability PCR may damage the cell membrane and give false negative results. We have found that freezing affects gram-positive bacteria more than gram-negative bacteria. A pilot test of your sample of interest is recommend before attempting pre-dye-treatment freezing. After the photolysis step, samples can be frozen.

5. If your sample of interest is a gram-negative bacterium, you may want to use PMA Enhancer for Gram Negative Bacteria (31038). This product is added to the sample during the viability PCR process, and improves the discrimination between live and dead cells. However, if your sample is a gram-positive strain, or a mixture of gram-negative and gram-positive, the Enhancer should not be used.

6. Viability PCR requires a photoactivation step in order for the dye to covalently bind to the dead cell DNA. The PMA-Lite™ LED Photolysis Device (E90002), designed for use with 1.5 mL tubes, is the most efficient device for performing this function. The Glo-Plate™ Blue (E90004) is a flat LED device that is best for photolysis of PMAxx™-treated samples. Other blue or white light sources may also be used. In general, the brighter the lights, the more efficiently they will perform the photolysis step. Non-LED lights, such as halogen lamps, may heat your sample and negatively affect the assay.

7. Part of the proposed mechanism of action of PMAxx™ is the removal of PMAxx™-bound DNA from samples via precipitation; therefore the amount of template DNA in each qPCR reaction should not be normalized between samples. Instead, PCR should be performed using equal volumes of gDNA eluate from each sample. As a positive control for the qPCR reaction, 1 ng of purified genomic DNA (gDNA) should be sufficient for achieving good signal.

8. In order to validate PMAxx™ effectiveness in your sample of interest, it is best to perform live-cell and dead-cell controls, each with and without PMAxx™ (Fig. 2). The change in Ct (dCt) caused by PMAxx™ for each control should be assessed (see “Data Analysis”, p. 2).

Before You Begin
- Read the “Considerations for viability PCR” section above to determine the appropriate viability dye, primers, Enhancer, and light source to use in your experiment.
- Ensure that you have a workspace that is protected from direct light. The steps of the protocol that require opening the vial of PMAxx™, pipetting PMAxx™, and incubating with PMAxx™ should be done in the dark.

Figure 1. Principle of PMAxx™ modification of dead cell DNA. The cell membrane-impermeable PMAxx™ dye (purple dot) selectively enters dead cells with compromised membranes (red) and after light treatment, covalently modifies the DNA. Subsequent PCR amplification of PMAxx™-modified DNA templates is inhibited, allowing selective quantitation of DNA from viable cells (green).
11. After the qPCR run, use the instrument software to determine the threshold cycle (Ct) for each of your samples.

2. In order to determine whether PMAxx™ adequately inhibited amplification of dead cell DNA, calculate the delta Ct (dCt) for each of your control cell populations as shown:

\[
dCt_{\text{dead}} = Ct_{\text{live, untreated}} - Ct_{\text{live, treated}}
\]

3. The expected result for the live cell control is a dCt close to 0 (+/- 1) (Fig. 4). This indicates that PMAxx™ treatment did not affect viable cell DNA amplification. If a larger dCt is seen for the live cell control, see Troubleshooting, next page.

4. The expected result for the dead cell control is a dCt > 4 (Fig. 4). (Since Ct values are on a log scale, a dCt of 4 represents a ~ 16-fold decrease, or 94% of dead cell DNA removed. A dCt of 8 represents a ~ 250-fold decrease, or 99.9% of dead cell DNA removed). If a low dCt is seen for the dead cell control, see Troubleshooting, next page.

5. The dead cell dCt that you obtain will depend on many factors, including: the bacterial strain or other cell type; how the cells were killed; the concentration of viability dye used; the amplicon length; whether Enhancer was used. We have found that at 25 uM PMAxx™, the dCt ranges from ~9 to 13, depending on the bacterial strain. In yeast, we have obtained a dCt of 7 for 100 uM PMAxx™.

Calculating the percentage of viable cells
If your live and dead cell controls look good, you can move on to determining the percentage of viable cells in your unknown samples.

1. Calculate the dCt for the unknown samples as shown:

\[
dCt_{\text{Sample}} = Ct_{\text{Sample, untreated}} - Ct_{\text{Sample, treated}}
\]

2. You can convert the dCt into a percentage of viable cells as shown:

\[
\text{% viable} = 100 / \text{Fold reduced}
\]

Figure 2. Viability PCR workflow overview, with recommended live and dead cell controls.
Calculating the absolute number of viable cells
If you want to calculate the absolute number of viable cells in your sample*, then in the same experiment you will need to run a standard curve using genomic DNA from your cell type of interest, from a known cell number. It is advisable that you have several gDNA dilutions which fall within the predetermined linear range of your qPCR assay.

1. Using the genomic DNA samples that fall within the linear range of the qPCR assay, plot a graph of Ct (y-axis) vs cell number (x-axis). Use graphing software to calculate the R² value (to determine linearity of the assay), slope, and y-intercept of the line.

2. Calculate the copy number of your unknown sample as shown:
   \[ \text{Cell number} = \frac{(\text{Ct}_{\text{sample}} - \text{y-intercept})}{\text{slope}} \]

*This assumes that none of the viable cell DNA has been lost during the DNA purification process.

Figure 3. Normalized qPCR curves from a viability PCR experiment in which live and heat-inactivated E. coli were treated with PMAxx™. qPCR was performed using primers against a region of the 16S rRNA gene. PMAxx™ treatment had no effect on amplification of DNA from live E. coli, but caused a dramatic delay in amplification of DNA from heat-killed E. coli.

Figure 4. The dCt of live and killed E. coli with and without PMAxx™ treatment. The Ct threshold values from the qPCR curves in Figure 3 were obtained. The difference in Ct (dCt) between treated and untreated samples is a good way to evaluate the effectiveness of PMAxx™ in your samples. To calculate dCt, subtract the Ct of the untreated sample from the Ct of the PMAxx™-treated sample (\(C_{\text{PMAxx\_treated}} - C_{\text{untreated}}\)). Calculate dCt of your live cell control, dead cell control, and unknown samples.

Troubleshooting

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Problem</th>
<th>Solutions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No positive qPCR signals are seen in any sample above the No Template Control (NTC).</td>
<td>Optimize the qPCR reaction using purified genomic DNA from the same cell/stain type that you are using in your viability PCR experiment. Ensure that your chosen primers, master mix, and program work well. Increase the template volume, if necessary.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| High dCt seen in the live cell control sample. | A high dCt value (i.e., > 1) in the live cell control sample generally indicates that the viability dye has penetrated through the live cell membrane.  
* Confirm that your cells are actually alive. Use a dead cell stain such as Ethidium Homodimer III (40051) to measure the membrane integrity of your cells.  
* Ensure that you are not using the PMA Enhancer with gram-positive bacteria.  
* Ensure that there is no detergent present in your samples.  
* Ensure that you are not freezing your samples prior to PMAxx™ treatment.  
* Try a lower dye concentration: titrate the dye until you get an effective concentration that only alters dead cell DNA.  
* If you are treating your cells in a simple buffer (i.e., PBS) or water, try treating them in media, or buffer containing BSA or other blocking protein. |
| Low dCt seen in the dead cell control sample. | A low dCt value (i.e., < 4) in the dead cell control sample can be caused by many different factors.  
* Confirm that your cells are actually dead. Use a dead cell stain such as Ethidium Homodimer III (40051) to measure the membrane integrity of your cells.  
* Try a higher dye concentration: titrate the dye until you get an effective concentration that only alters dead cell DNA.  
* If your cells are gram-negative bacteria, try using the PMA Enhancer for Gram Negative Bacteria (31038).  
* If you are using the Glo-Plate™ Blue (E90004), increase the light exposure time (for example, 30 minutes instead of 15).  
* Ensure that the amplicon that you are amplifying is at least 100 bp. If possible, try using primers for a longer amplicon.  
* Be sure to use the same volume of eluted DNA in each PCR reaction (i.e., do not normalize to ug of DNA (see "Considerations for viability PCR" #7 for additional details).  
* If your samples are complex (such as soil or feces), try diluting them in sterile PBS, increasing the light exposure with more frequent mixing, and increasing the PMAxx™ concentration up to 100 or 200 uM. |

PMAx™ & PMA References
PM from Biotium has been cited in hundreds of publications. PMAxx™ is newer but has also been cited in several publications. For an updated list of selected references please check the PMAxx™ product page or the Viability PCR technology page on our website.


Please visit our website at www.biotium.com for information on our life science research products, including environmentally friendly EvaGreen® qPCR master mixes, fluorescent microbiology stains and viability assays, fluorescent CF® dye antibody conjugates, and kits for cell biology research.

PMAxx™ and its uses are covered by pending US and international patents. Materials from Biotium are sold for research use only, and are not intended for food, drug, household, or cosmetic use.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Catalog number</th>
<th>Product</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>40019</td>
<td>PMA Dye, 20 mM in dH2O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40015</td>
<td>EMA (Ethidium Monoazide)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E90002</td>
<td>PMA-Lite™ LED Photolysis Device</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E90004</td>
<td>Glo-Plate™ Blue LED Illuminator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31038</td>
<td>PMA Enhancer for Gram-Negative Bacteria, 5X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31033</td>
<td>PMA-PCR Bacterial Viability Kit, Salmonella</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31034</td>
<td>PMA-PCR Bacterial Viability Kit, M. tuberculosis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31035</td>
<td>PMA-PCR Bacterial Viability Kit, Staph. aureus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31036</td>
<td>PMA-PCR Bacterial Viability Kit, MRSA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31037</td>
<td>PMA-PCR Bacterial Viability Kit, E. coli O157:H7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31050</td>
<td>PMA-PCR Bacterial Viability Kit, E. coli</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31051</td>
<td>PMA-PCR Bacterial Viability Kit, Listeria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31053</td>
<td>PMA-PCR Bacterial Viability Kit, Legionella</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31075, 31076</td>
<td>Viability PCR Starter Kits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40051</td>
<td>Ethidium Homodimer III, 1 mM in DMSO (dead cell stain)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40102</td>
<td>BactoView™ Live Green</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40101</td>
<td>BactoView™ Live Red</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30027</td>
<td>Viability/Cytotoxicity Assay Kit for Bacteria Live &amp; Dead Cells</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32000</td>
<td>Live Bacterial Gram Stain Kit</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>