

## Physicochemical properties and *N*-terminal sequence of eel lectin

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Some physicochemical properties of the L-fucose-binding lectin from the serum of the European eel (*Anguilla anguilla*) were determined. The lectin is a dimer composed of identical subunits of  $M_r$  approx. 40000. In agreement with previous results [Horejší & Kocourek (1978) *Biochim. Biophys. Acta* 538, 299–315], the subunit was shown to comprise two non-glycosylated polypeptides of  $M_r$  approx. 20000 and linked by disulphide bonds. *N*-Terminal sequence analysis, carboxypeptidase digestion and peptide mapping indicated identity of the polypeptides. There were two L-fucose-binding sites per subunit with  $K_D$   $1.6 \times 10^{-3}$  M for the lectin–fucose complex, as determined by equilibrium dialysis.

This study describes some of the physicochemical properties of eel lectin (the L-fucose-binding lectin from the serum of the European eel, *Anguilla anguilla*) isolated as described elsewhere (Kelly, 1980). That the serum of *A. anguilla* possessed haemagglutinating activity directed against human group-O erythrocytes was first shown by Jonsson (1944). Subsequently Watkins & Morgan (1952) reported that this agglutination could be inhibited by L-fucose, this being the first description of inhibition of a blood-group ‘antibody’ by a simple sugar.

Eel lectin has previously been characterized by Horejší & Kocourek (1978) as having a subunit  $M_r$  of 44000. The subunit consisted of two polypeptides linked by disulphide bonds and each of  $M_r$  approx. 23000. Thin-layer gel filtration indicated that the  $M_r$  of the intact protein was 50000, a value that was anomalously low when compared with the  $s_{20,w}$  value of 6.5S. In contrast, the lectin from the American eel (*Anguilla rostrata*) was shown to be a trimer (with  $s_{20,w}$  of 7.2S) of non-covalently associated subunits each of  $M_r$  approx. 40000 (Bezkorovainy *et al.*, 1971). The subunits were composed of four polypeptide chains linked by disulphide bonds and of  $M_r$  10000; *N*- and *C*-terminal analyses suggested that the polypeptides were of two different kinds (Springer & Desai, 1971). Matsumoto & Osawa (1974) have also isolated eel lectin (the eel species was not stated)

and determined the  $s_{20,w}$  as 7.2S and the  $M_r$ , by gel filtration, as 140000.

In addition, on the basis of binding studies employing affinity electrophoresis, Horejší *et al.* (1977) have reported that there are five eel isolectins.

### Materials and methods

#### Materials

Eel lectin was prepared from pooled eel sera by affinity chromatography followed by gel filtration, and rabbit anti-(eel lectin) serum was prepared as described elsewhere (Kelly, 1980). Trypsin (diphenylcarbamoyl chloride-treated) (EC 3.4.21.4), carboxypeptidase A (EC 3.4.12.2) and carboxypeptidase B (di-isopropyl phosphorofluoridate-treated) (EC 3.4.12.3) were from Sigma Chemical Co. Clostripain (EC 3.4.22.8) was from Boehringer Corp. L-[6-<sup>3</sup>H]Fucose (20–30 Ci/mmol) was from Amersham International. All other reagents were of analytical grade. Phosphate-buffered saline was 0.155 M-NaCl/10 mM-sodium phosphate buffer, pH 7.0. Water was glass-distilled.

#### Reduction and alkylation of eel lectin

Lectin (10 mg) was dissolved in 8 M-urea/0.67 M-Tris/HCl, pH 8.6, and disulphide bonds were reduced with 2-mercaptoethanol and thiol groups alkylated with sodium iodoacetate (Crestfield *et al.*, 1963). After dialysis against 10 mM-NH<sub>4</sub>HCO<sub>3</sub>, protein was recovered by freeze-drying.

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### *M<sub>r</sub> determination*

The *M<sub>r</sub>* of purified eel lectin was determined by fast protein liquid chromatography gel filtration on a TSK-G3000SW column. Elution was with phosphate-buffered saline at a flow rate of 0.5 ml/min. The column was calibrated with the following proteins:  $\beta$ -galactosidase, phosphorylase *b*, human serum transferrin, bovine serum albumin, hen ovalbumin, myoglobin and cytochrome *c*. Eel serum was fractionated on a column (1.3 cm  $\times$  125 cm) of Sephadex G-200, which was eluted with phosphate-buffered saline at a flow rate of 6 ml/h. Fractions were assayed for lectin by fused rocket immunoelectrophoresis (Svendsen, 1973), with the rabbit anti-(eel lectin) serum. The column was calibrated with catalase, lactate dehydrogenase, human serum transferrin, bovine serum albumin, hen ovalbumin and ribonuclease A.

The subunit *M<sub>r</sub>* of eel lectin was determined by polyacrylamide-gel electrophoresis in the presence of sodium dodecyl sulphate by using the system of Fairbanks *et al.* (1971) with slab gels (16 cm  $\times$  20 cm  $\times$  0.1 cm) of 7.5% (w/v) polyacrylamide. The *M<sub>r</sub>* markers were: hen ovotransferrin, bovine serum albumin, hen ovalbumin, carbonic anhydrase and cytochrome *c*.

### *Amino acid analysis*

Samples were hydrolysed in constant-boiling HCl at 110°C for 24, 48 and 72 h and analysed on a Rank-Hilger Chromaspek J180 ion-exchange chromatograph. Cysteine (plus half-cystine) was determined as carboxymethyl-cysteine after hydrolysis of reduced and alkylated eel lectin. Tryptophan was determined after hydrolysis in 3M-toluene-*p*-sulphonic acid/0.2% (w/v) 3-(2-aminoethyl)indole (Liu, 1974).

### *Carbohydrate analysis*

This was performed by Professor J. R. Clamp, Department of Medicine, University of Bristol, Bristol. After methanolysis and conversion of liberated sugars into the *O*-trimethylsilyl ethers, samples were analysed by g.l.c. (Clamp, 1977).

### *N-Terminal sequence analysis*

Amino acid sequences were determined by Professor P. Osinski (Unit of Experimental Medicine, International Institute of Cellular and Molecular Pathology, Brussels, Belgium) by using the Beckman 890C sequencer with programmes modified from that of Brauer *et al.* (1975). A 100–150 nmol portion of polypeptide was used for each determination. Thiazolinone fractions were converted manually into the phenylthiohydantoin derivatives, which were identified by reverse-phase high-pressure liquid chromatography on a

Zorbax cyanopropylsilane column (Johnson *et al.*, 1979).

A 3 nmol portion of reduced and alkylated eel lectin was also analysed on the gas-phase sequencer (Hewick *et al.*, 1981) by Dr. M. D. Waterfield and Mr. N. F. Totty (Imperial Cancer Research Fund, Lincoln's Inn Fields, London). Amino acid phenylthiohydantoin derivatives were identified by reverse-phase high-pressure liquid chromatography on a Zorbax Dupont C<sub>8</sub> column.

### *Carboxypeptidase digestion*

Reduced and alkylated lectin (4 mg) was dissolved in 2 ml of 0.1 M-sodium phosphate buffer, pH 8.0, containing 0.1 mM-norleucine as internal standard. The solution was placed on ice, and carboxypeptidases A and B were added in equal amounts such that the enzyme/substrate ratio was 1:20. Samples (300  $\mu$ l) were taken from the solution before and immediately after addition of enzyme. The sample was then incubated at 37°C, with further samples being taken after 2, 4, 6 and 18 h. These were each added to 200  $\mu$ l of 0.25 M-HCl, heated at 80°C for 3 min and centrifuged, after which the supernatants were analysed on the amino acid analyser. A control solution of enzyme alone was treated in parallel. Two separate determinations of the C-terminal amino acids were made.

### *Peptide mapping*

(i) *Trypsin digestion*. A 2 mg portion of eel lectin, oxidized with performic acid (Means & Feeney, 1971), was digested with trypsin in 100  $\mu$ l of 50 mM-NH<sub>4</sub>HCO<sub>3</sub> at an enzyme/substrate ratio of 1:25 for 4 h at 37°C. The digest was then loaded on Whatman 3MM paper for two-dimensional peptide mapping. Separation in the first dimension was by electrophoresis at pH 6.5 for 1 h at 3 kV (Ambler, 1963) and in the second by descending chromatography with butan-1-ol/acetic acid/water (3:1:1, by vol.) as solvent. The chromatogram was developed for 12 h and then stained with fluorescamine (Mendez & Lai, 1975).

(ii) *Clostripain digestion*. A 1.5 mg portion of reduced and alkylated lectin was digested with clostripain as described by Mitchell & Harrington (1970) at an enzyme/substrate ratio of 1:100 for 3 h at 37°C. A sample of the digest was taken for analysis by sodium dodecyl sulphate/polyacrylamide-gel electrophoresis and the remainder was analysed by paper electrophoresis and chromatography as above.

(iii) *CNBr cleavage*. CNBr cleavage (Gross & Witkop, 1962) was performed on 1 mg of reduced and alkylated lectin. Cleavage products were analysed by sodium dodecyl sulphate/polyacryla-

mid-gel electrophoresis and paper electrophoresis.

(iv) *Dimethyl sulphoxide/HBr cleavage*. Dimethyl sulphoxide/HBr cleavage (Savignone & Fontana, 1977) was performed on 4mg of reduced and alkylated lectin. The products were analysed by sodium dodecyl sulphate/polyacrylamide-gel electrophoresis and partially separated on a column (100cm  $\times$  1.5cm) of Sephadex G-50, with elution with 5% (w/v) formic acid.

#### *Equilibrium dialysis*

Micro dialysis cells were made (in the Medical School Workshop, University of Bristol, Bristol) and assembled as described by Englund *et al.* (1969). A 25  $\mu$ l volume of lectin solution (4mg/ml) in phosphate-buffered saline was introduced into each chamber on one side of a dialysis membrane, and 25  $\mu$ l of solutions of L-[6-<sup>3</sup>H]fucose (10  $\mu$ Ci/ $\mu$ mol) in phosphate-buffered saline (at concentrations in the range 0.1–5 mM) was introduced into the chambers on the other side of the membrane. The cells were incubated at 4°C for 6h with slow rotation, after which 15  $\mu$ l samples were taken from each chamber, 10  $\mu$ l of each then being transferred to scintillant for determination of radioactivity (20min for each sample) in an Isocap 300 counter.

## Results

Two peaks (of comparable magnitude), of  $M_r$  51 000 and 78 000, were observed on gel filtration of purified eel lectin. On gel filtration of eel serum, the lectin (identified by fused rocket immuno-

electrophoresis) showed an apparent  $M_r$  of 80 000, being eluted at the position of the human serum transferrin marker (Fig. 1). Analysis by sodium dodecyl sulphate/polyacrylamide-gel electrophoresis showed that the subunit  $M_r$  was 38 000 ( $\pm$  2000, from 12 determinations). After reduction with 2-mercaptoethanol, a single band of  $M_r$  18 000 ( $\pm$  2000) was observed; similarly, reduced and alkylated eel lectin ran as a single band of  $M_r$  18 000. These results confirm those obtained by Horejsi & Kocourek (1978), showing that the eel subunit is composed of two polypeptides linked by disulphide bonds. They also indicate that the native lectin is a dimer of non-covalently associated subunits. Some dissociation of this dimer is apparent, after purification of the lectin, this possibly being due to partial denaturation.

The amino acid composition of eel lectin is shown in Table 1, together with the results of carbohydrate analysis. The values are expressed as mol of amino acid residue per mol of lectin, assuming the  $M_r$  of the latter to be 40 000. No carbohydrate was detected (other than trace amounts of glucose). Again, the results are in good agreement with those reported by Horejsi & Kocourek (1978) and with those reported by Springer & Desai (1971) determined for the lectin from *A. rostrata*.

The sequence of the first 18 amino acid residues is shown in Fig. 2(a), together with the yield of amino acid phenylthiohydantoin derivative at each step (the yields are those obtained with the gas-phase sequencer). Residue 8 was identified as threonine, although the instability of the phenylthiohydantoin derivative meant the yield could not

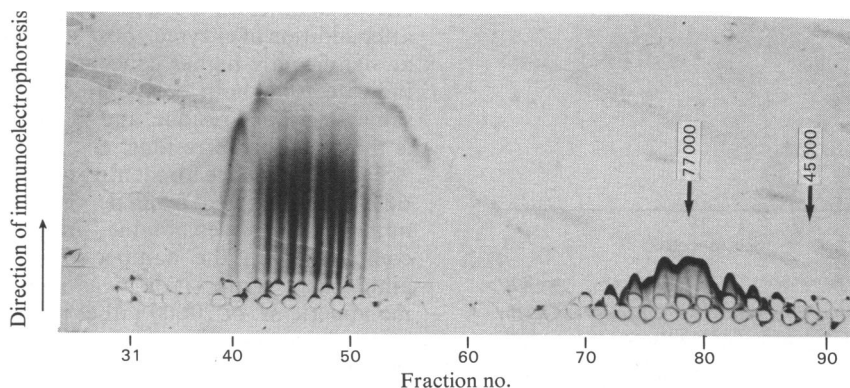


Fig. 1. Distribution of eel lectin, determined by fused rocket immunoelectrophoresis, after gel filtration of eel serum. Samples (5  $\mu$ l) from each fraction were applied to wells in the region of the agarose (1% w/v) gel that contained no antiserum. Electrophoresis into gel containing 1% (v/v) rabbit anti-(eel lectin) serum was at 3 V/cm for 16h with Tris/barbitone buffer, pH 8.6. The gel was dried and stained with Coomassie Blue. The positions of the  $M_r$  markers (human serum transferrin and ovalbumin) are shown. The fainter precipitin peak in the larger- $M_r$  fractions arises from reaction between the antiserum and a non-lectin eel serum component (present in trace amounts in the lectin preparation used for immunization).

Table 1. *Amino acid and carbohydrate composition of eel lectin*

Amino acid values were determined after hydrolysis for 24, 48 and 72h, and only the corrected (to the nearest integer) results are shown. The values given assume the lectin  $M_r$  to be 40000.

Component	Composition (mol/mol of eel lectin)
Asx	39
Thr	24
Ser	26
Glx	46
Pro	29
Gly	29
Ala	29
Cys	22*
Val	26
Met	4
Ile	20
Leu	23
Tyr	14
Phe	8
His	15
Trp	2†
Lys	16
Arg	15
D-Glucose	0.2‡

\* Determined as carboxymethyl-cysteine after hydrolysis of reduced and alkylated eel lectin.

† Determined after hydrolysis in 3M-toluene-*p*-sulphonic acid.

‡ From g.l.c. analysis.

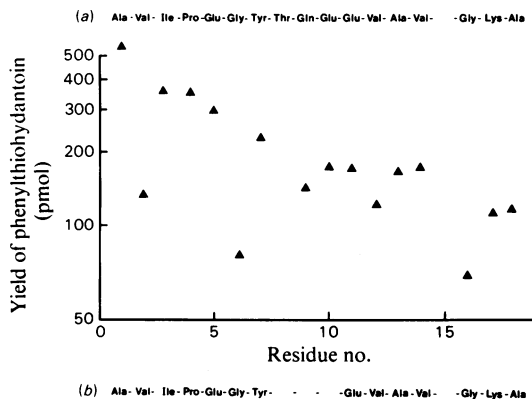


Fig. 2. *N-Terminal amino acid sequence of eel lectin* (a) Automated Edman degradations were performed on 3nmol of eel lectin with the gas-phase sequencer, and amino acid phenylthiohydantoin derivatives were identified by high-pressure liquid chromatography. No quantification of residue 8, threonine, could be made. (b) *N-Terminal* sequence of a 7000- $M_r$  peptide produced by cleavage of eel lectin with dimethyl sulphoxide/HBr. The sequence (determined on 100nmol on the Beckman 890C sequencer) identifies it as the *N-terminal* peptide.

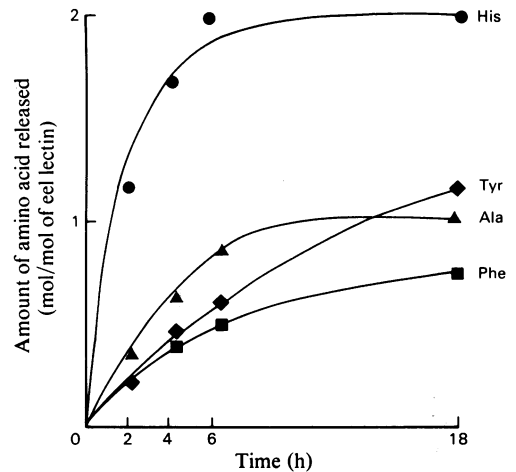


Fig. 3. *C-Terminal* analysis of eel lectin. The time course of release of amino acids, on digestion with carboxypeptidases A and B, is shown.

be quantified. The identification was based on the characteristic elution pattern of two double peaks, one of which is eluted before and the other after the position of the phenylthiohydantoin derivative of tyrosine (Waterfield *et al.*, 1983). No assignment of residue 15 could be made. No sequence heterogeneity was observed. Fig. 2(b) shows the *N-terminal* sequence of a peptide obtained from cleavage with dimethyl sulphoxide/HBr (see below); the sequence identified it as the *N-terminal* peptide.

Digestion with carboxypeptidase resulted in the rapid release of histidine, which reached a maximum value of 2 mol/mol of eel lectin (assuming the lectin  $M_r$  to be 40000), as shown in Fig. 3. Although other amino acids were present from 4h after addition of enzyme, those shown were present at significantly higher concentrations. The result indicates that both polypeptide chains have the same *C-terminal* residue, and suggests that alanine is the penultimate residue.

Further evidence for identity of the two polypeptides was obtained from peptide mapping. The number of peptides obtained in each case, when compared with the number expected from the amino acid composition, was consistent with a monomeric  $M_r$  of 20000 rather than 40000. Thus, after cleavage with trypsin, 17 peptides were resolved on the two-dimensional map (Fig. 4). Sodium dodecyl sulphate/polyacrylamide-gel electrophoresis analysis of the products of clostripain cleavage showed complete destruction of the original polypeptide. Paper electrophoresis resolved six bands, one migrating towards the anode and the remainder towards the cathode. All were single peptides except band 3 (numbering from the

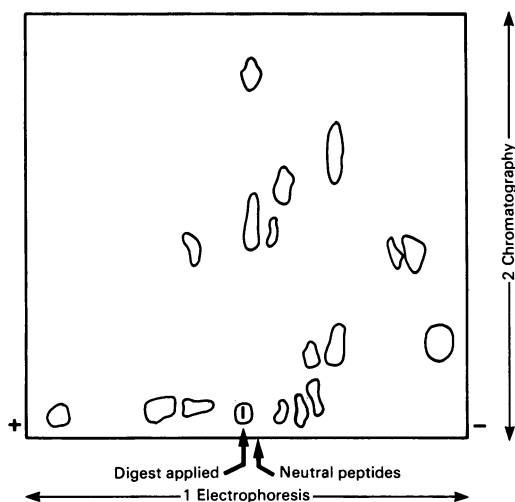


Fig. 4. Peptide map of trypsin digest of performic acid-oxidized eel lectin

After digestion of eel lectin (2mg) with trypsin, peptides were separated by electrophoresis (1) and chromatography (2). Some (presumably) undigested material remained at the origin. 'Neutral' peptides, i.e. those in the region arrowed, were not completely resolved.

cathode), which was resolved as two peptides by chromatography. No apparent change in  $M_r$  was observed on sodium dodecyl sulphate/polyacrylamide-gel-electrophoretic analysis after cleavage with CNBr. However, paper electrophoresis showed two lightly staining peptides that migrated towards the anode plus a strongly staining band at the origin. Cleavage with dimethyl sulphoxide/HBr (resulting in cleavage of the peptide bond *C*-terminal to tryptophan), produced a peptide of  $M_r$  13000 plus one of  $M_r$  approx. 7000, together with some uncleaved lectin. The smaller- $M_r$  peptide was isolated, as described, and identified as *N*-terminal by sequence analysis.

Fig. 5 shows the results obtained from equilibrium dialysis, where they have been analysed by a plot of the Scatchard equation (Scatchard *et al.*, 1950, 1957):

$$\frac{R}{[\text{Fucose}]_{\text{free}}} = n \cdot K_a - R \cdot K_a$$

where  $R$  is the ratio of bound fucose concentration to the total lectin concentration,  $K_a$  is the association constant for the binding of fucose by lectin and  $n$  is the number of binding sites per lectin molecule. A value of 40000 has been assumed for the  $M_r$  of eel lectin. The calculated line of best fit gives  $n$  as 2.14 and  $K_a = 6.3 \times 10^2 \text{ M}^{-1}$ , i.e. there are two identical L-fucose-binding sites per subunit with  $K_D$  of  $1.6 \times 10^{-3} \text{ M}$ .

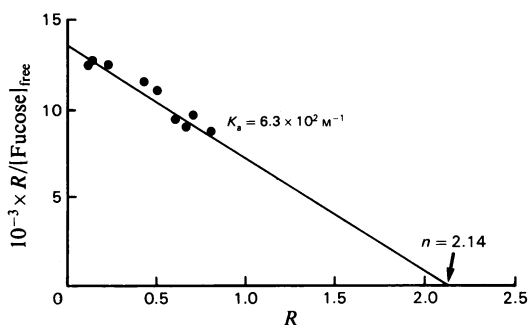


Fig. 5. Scatchard analysis of results from equilibrium dialysis

Experimental details are in the text. The data were analysed by the Scatchard equation (see the text) and the calculated line of best fit gives  $n$ , the number of binding sites per lectin subunit, as 2.14, with  $K_a$ , the association constant of fucose-binding, as  $6.3 \times 10^2 \text{ M}^{-1}$ .

## Discussion

In summary, the results indicate that eel lectin is a dimer of non-covalently associated identical subunits of  $M_r$  approx. 40000. The subunit is non-glycosylated and comprises two identical polypeptide chains (of  $M_r$  20000), which are linked by disulphide bonds. There are two identical L-fucose-binding sites per subunit, which show rather low affinity for the monosaccharide.

The results of *N*-terminal sequence analysis, *C*-terminal analysis and peptide mapping argue strongly that the polypeptide chains are identical. There are problems in interpreting peptide maps arising from factors such as incomplete hydrolysis, non-specific hydrolysis, incomplete separation of peptides etc. However, given these reservations, the peptide maps revealed no major structural heterogeneity that could have resulted in an increased number of peptides, and therefore do not provide evidence for more than one gene product, i.e. isolectins.

Although isolectins have been demonstrated in some cases, e.g. phytohaemagglutinin, the lectin from the red kidney bean (Allen *et al.*, 1969; Yachnin & Svenson, 1972), in others initial reports have not been substantiated by subsequent structural analyses. Thus Richardson *et al.* (1978) sequenced the  $\alpha$ -subunit of pea lectin and found no evidence for the earlier suggestion based on isoelectric-focusing data, that there were two isolectins (Trowbridge, 1974). Similarly Kaplan *et al.* (1977) found no sequence heterogeneity in the *N*-terminal 86 residues of limulin, although on isoelectric focusing three bands were resolved. In the present example, the presence of multiple bands on affinity electrophoresis provided the

main evidence for the report of five eel isolectins (Horejši *et al.*, 1977). However, affinity preparations of eel lectin are likely to include components capable of binding to the lectin that are co-purified (Kelly, 1980) and that could give rise to apparent binding heterogeneity reflecting lectin species with no, one, two etc. binding sites occupied. In keeping with this suggestion, the  $K_D$  value determined in the present study, although of the same order, is slightly lower than those determined by Horejši *et al.* (1977).

The amino acid composition of the lectins from *A. anguilla* and *A. rostrata* are strikingly similar, as might be expected for two species of the same genus. However, there are differences in the subunit structure, that of *A. rostrata* comprising polypeptides of  $M_r$  10000 rather than 20000. Eel lectin shows no obvious physicochemical similarity to other vertebrate lectins. The fish lectins isolated by Krajhanzl *et al.* (1978*a,b*), for example, differ in  $M_r$  and amino acid composition, as do the D-galactosyl-binding lectins isolated from various sources (Teichberg *et al.*, 1975; de Waard *et al.*, 1976; Den & Malinzak, 1977; Powell, 1980).

With a few exceptions, such as those involved in catabolism of serum glycoproteins (Ashwell & Morell, 1974; Stahl *et al.*, 1978), the physiological functions of lectins are not known, although many have been proposed. Structural studies, although giving few clues as to function, have shown that lectins are an extremely diverse grouping and thus are likely to have equally diverse functions.

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