Capillary Electrophoresis in DNA Analysis

Troubleshooting the ABI 310

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Outline for Workshop

- Introductions
- STR Analysis
- Introduction to CE and ABI 310
- Data Interpretation
- Additional Topics – Real-time PCR and miniSTRs
- Higher Throughput Approaches
- Troubleshooting the ABI 310 (Participant Roundtable)
- Additional Topics – Y-STRs, validation, accuracy
- Review and Test

Troubleshooting

1. Chemistry problems- stutter, quantitation, PCR
2. External factors – power supply, room temperature
3. Sample and buffer problems – formamide, urea, dirt and dust
4. Instrument problems – age, capillary clogging, syringe leaks, voltage leaks

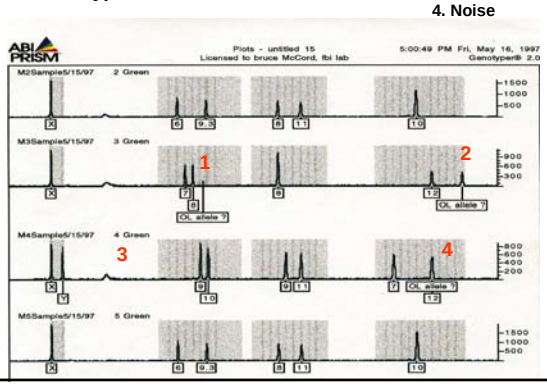
Bug a Boos…..

1. **Adenylation - PCR issue, particularly when overamplifying –effect on peak height**
2. **Stutter – also a PCR issue – a big problem with low and high template conc.**
3. **Free Dye – a manufacturing problem**
   Contaminants from primer dye manufacture
4. **Voltage Spikes – instrument or buffer problem –**
   Filtration or centrifugation will work sometimes
5. **Pull – up - Consider the effect of the capillary window, the buffer and the CCD on the matrix**

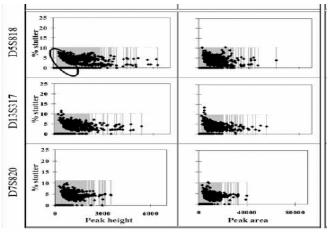
Off-ladder alleles

Four types

1. **Spike**
2. **OL Allele**
3. **Free Dye**
4. **Noise**



% Stutter vs Peak Height



At low concentrations stutter increases – a stochaistic effect?

Poor quality samples from casework may also cause problems due to inhibition.

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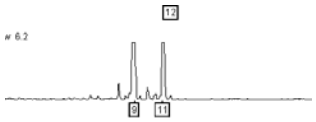
Overloaded peaks will also show relatively high stutter



Truncated peaks give wrong ratios for peak stutter

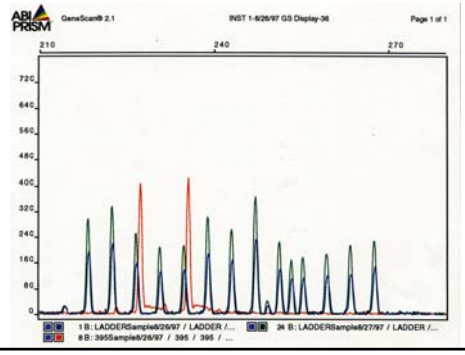
Why else is overlaoding bad?

1. **raised baseline**
2. **non specific amplification**
3. **peak hight ratios**

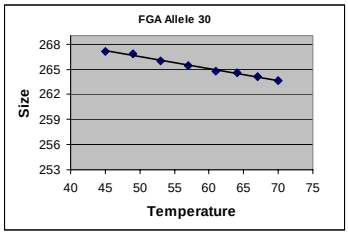
Temperature effects

- Viscosity – mobility shift
  - $\mu_{ep} = q/6\pi\eta r$
- Diffusion – band broadening
  - ←— DNA —→
- Conformation – DNA size based sieving
  - ~~ vs ----- $\mu_{ep} = q/6\pi\eta r$
- Current – Power
  - **P= VI = I^2R**

Band shift in CE Analysis of the FGA locus
Likely the result of temperature or viscosity induced mobility change



Effect of Temperature on allele size

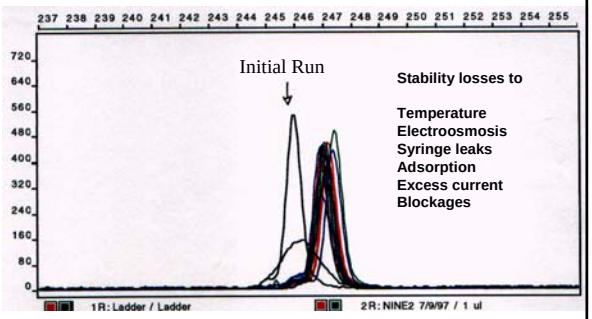


Slope is 0.14 bases/degree centigrade
Standard deviation is O. 17 or so
Therefore a small change in temperature has a big effect

What to do if calibration is lost?

- If protocol permits
  - Go to the next ladder
  - Rerun sample
  - Check current
  - Check allelic ladder
- Always check the Rox ladder
  - Look for extra bands
  - Check peak height
  - Check parameters and alignment

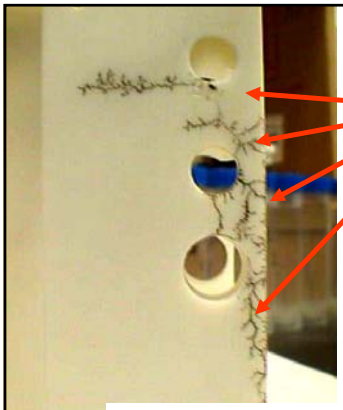
Due to its structure and its non-calibration, the "250"peak can be used to indicate stability



Monitoring Room Temperature Over Time

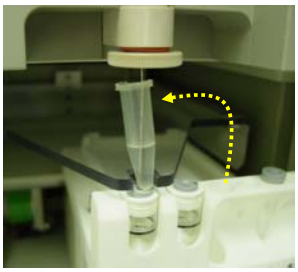
Cleanliness

- Urea sublimates and breaks down to ionic components - these find a path to ground
- Similarly wet buffer under a vial creates paths to ground
- Capillary windows must be clear or matrix effects will occur
- Laser will often assist in this process
- Vial caps will transfer low levels of DNA to capillary



Keep Your System Clean!

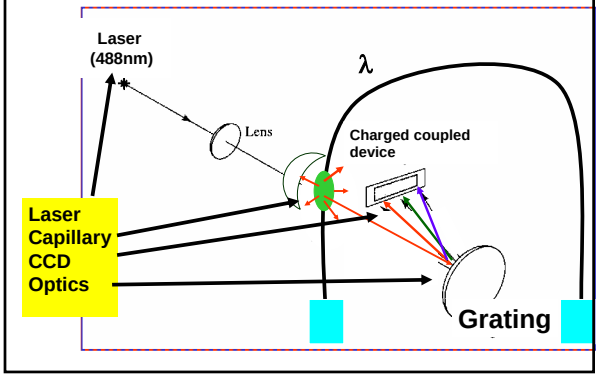
Storage when ABI 310 is not in use



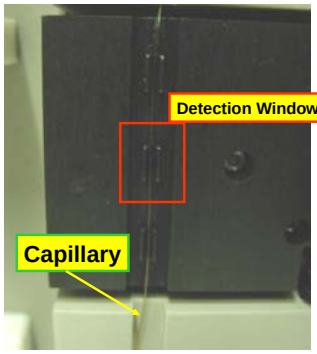
Remember that the water in the open tube will evaporate over time…

- Keep inlet of capillary in water…if it dries out then urea crystals from the polymer will clog the opening
- The waste vial (normally in position 3) can be moved into position
- A special device can be purchased from Suppelco to rinse the capillary off-line
- Store in distilled water
- Note that the laser is on when the instrument is on

Consider the optical system



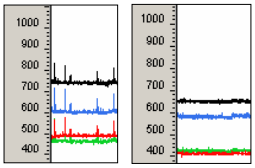
The Detection Window



Make sure that the capillary window is lined up (if it is not, then no peaks will be seen)

Window may need to be cleaned with ethanol or methanol

Review Start of Raw Data Collection



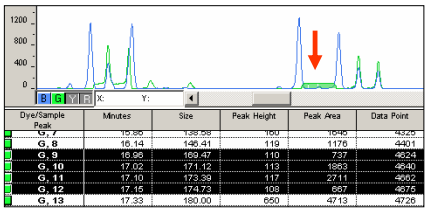
Little spikes indicate need to change buffer… check current

Buffer Issues

- The buffer and polymer affect the background fluorescence- affecting the matrix
- Urea crystals and dust may produce spikes
- High salt concentrations may produce reannealing of DNA
- High salt concentrations affect current
- Low polymer concentrations affect peak resolution

Raised Baseline Problem

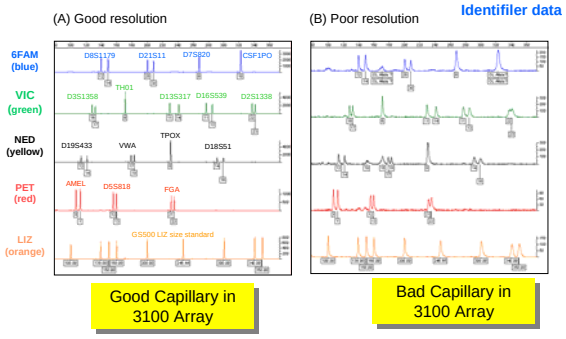
- A poor matrix can lead to raised baseline and therefore calling of too many peaks
- Larger sized alleles will not be identified as peaks because the GeneScan table for a particular dye color has filled up



Some Other Problems

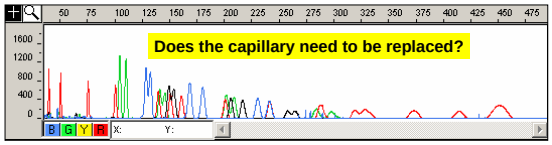
- Capillary with poor resolution
- “Melt downs” – sample contaminants
- Syringe leak or bottoming – peak broadening and mobility shifts
- Formamide conductivity gives low sensitivity or excessive sensitivity

Capillary Resolution Differences

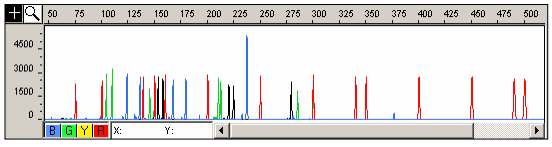


Butler, J.M., Buel, E., Crivellente, F., McCord, B.R. (2004) Forensic DNA typing by capillary electrophoresis: using the ABI Prism 310 and 3100 Genetic Analyzers for STR analysis. *Electrophoresis*, 25: 1397-1412.

Meltdowns can be permanent or transitory



No! The next injection looks fine…

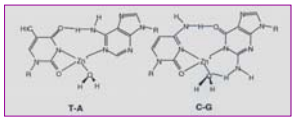


A permanent loss of resolution may mean

- Adsorptive sites on a capillary
- Initiation of electroosmotic flow
- Conductivity changes in buffer
- Wrong molecular weight or concentration of sieving polymer (viscosity)

Transition metal ions

Metal cations present in degraded samples represent a different type of contamination

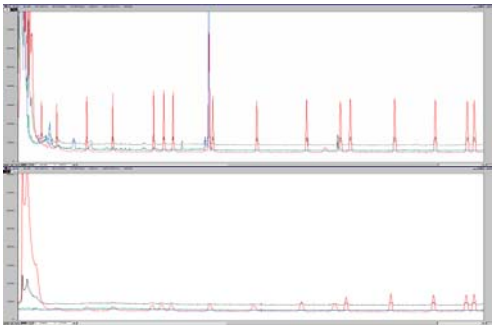


Zn^{2+}, Co^{2+}, and Ni^{2+} form DNA-metal ion complexes, termed M-DNA.at pH conditions above 8,

These cations produce severe effects in CE injection and analysis

Hartzell and McCord, *Electrophoresis*, in press

CE: Effect of pH 7 vs. 8.3

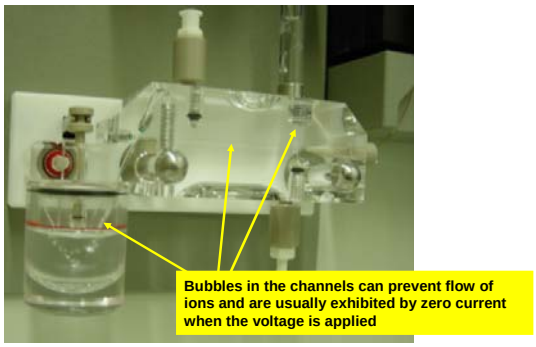


1 µl TH01 added to 10 µl of 3.0 mM $NiCl_2$ in 10 mM Tris, pH 7 or pH 8.3. Sample allowed to interact for 1 hr and then 1 µl added to ROX/formamide.

Another cause of band broadening can be poor capillary loading

- Syringe leaks
  - At the barrel
  - At the capillary nut
  - At the capillary window
- Viscosity changes
  - Water in the block
  - Bubbles
  - Temperature
- Capillary conditioning
  - Preelectrophoresis
  - clogging

Remove all bubbles from the channels



Beware of Urea Crystals

Urea crystals have formed due to a small leak where the capillary comes into the pump block

Pump block should be well cleaned to avoid problems with urea crystal formation

Troubleshooting is more than following the protocols

It means keeping watch on all aspects of the operation

1. Monitoring conductivity of sample and formamide
2. Keeping track of current and syringe position in log.
3. Watching the laser current
4. Watching and listening for voltage spikes
5. Monitoring room temperature and humidity

Roundtable of Workshop Participants' Problem Samples